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TWO
DISCOURSES,
ON THE
PERPETUITY AND PROVISION
OF
GOD'S GRACIOUS COVENANT
WITH
ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED.

BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH IN SALEM.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

To which are annexed,
LETTERS TO THE REV. THOMAS BALDWIN, D.D.
on his Book, entitled
THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY, &c.

O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones; be ye mindful always of his Covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; even of the Covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting Covenant.

DAVID.

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.

PAUL.

So shall he sprinkle many nations.

ISAIAH.

SALEM:
PRINTED BY HAVEN POOL, FOR THE AUTHOR.
1807.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT :

§Seal. §**BE IT REMEMBERED**, that on the twenty ninth day of January, in the thirty first year of the Independence of the United States of America, SAMUEL WORCESTER, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, *to wit* :

“Two Discourses, on the perpetuity and provision of God’s gracious Covenant with Abraham and his seed. By SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M. Pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem. Second edition, revised. To which are annexed, Letters to the Rev. Thomas Baldwin, D. D. on his Book, entitled The Baptism of Believers only, &c.

“O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones ; be ye mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations ; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac, and hath confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.—*David*. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.—*Paul*. So shall he sprinkle many nations.—*Isaiah*.”

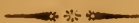
In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, “An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned ;” and also to an Act intituled, “An Act supplementary to an Act, intituled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching Historical and other Prints.”

WILLIAM S. SHAW, } Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.

AT a meeting of the Tabernacle Church in Salem, August 19, 1805, *Voted, unanimously*, to request our Rev. Pastor to furnish a copy of his Discourses, lately delivered in the Tabernacle, on the Perpetuity and Provision of God's gracious Covenant with Abraham and his Seed, for publication from the press.

Extract from the Records.

Attest, JOHN PUNCHARD, *Church Clerk.*
Salem, Aug. 20, 1805.



TO THE
TABERNACLE CHURCH AND SOCIETY
IN SALEM,
THESE DISCOURSES,
*ON THE PERPETUITY AND PROVISION OF GOD'S
GRACIOUS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM
AND HIS SEED,*
FIRST COMPOSED WITH A VIEW TO THEIR BENEFIT,
AND NOW MADE PUBLIC IN COMPLIANCE
WITH THEIR REQUEST, ARE,
WITH THE BEST WISHES,
HUMBLY INSCRIBED,
*BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE,
AND DEVOTED PASTOR,
AND SERVANT FOR JESUS' SAKE,*
THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.



THE numerous calls for these DISCOURSES, since the whole of the first edition, consisting of a thousand copies, was taken off, determined the Author, more than six months ago, to revise them for a second impression. But as it was understood, that they were to be noticed, in the way of answer from the press, it was deemed expedient to delay the republication, until an answer should appear. Some Strictures upon them have just come before the public, and are of a nature to require some notice.

SERMON I.



GALATIANS III. 29.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

IT has ever pleased the sovereign God to treat with mankind in the way of covenant. In this way he treated with Adam in his primeval state. He proposed a covenant, agreeably to which, in case of fidelity on Adam's part, he would confirm Adam in a state of holiness, and confer upon him and his posterity the blessings of a glorious immortality. In this way he treated with Noah, after the destruction of the world by the general deluge. He established his covenant with Noah and his sons, and with their seed after them, for perpetual generations, in pursuance of which he would preserve all flesh from destruction by another general deluge, as long as the earth should remain. In this way he treated with Abraham, when he called him away from his country and his kindred, and his father's house, to sojourn in a land in which he was a stranger. He made a covenant with Abraham, in the fulfilment of which he would confer upon Abraham and his posterity great and numerous blessings, and ultimately extend the blessings to all the families of the earth. And in this way he continues to treat with mankind. All the blessings, which from generation to generation, he bestows upon the church and upon the world, are bestowed in pursuance of some existing covenant.

By the influence of Judaizing teachers, many of the Galatians appear to have been removed from him who had called them into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. They renounced the doctrine of free grace, and insisted on the deeds of the law as constituting, at least in part, the ground of justification before God. To correct this error, in this material point, was evidently the primary object of this inspired epistle. Having touched upon his subject in the preceding chapters, the apostle enters, in this third chapter, upon a train of argument, peculiarly close and solemn. After upbraiding his Galatian brethren with their folly in departing from the doctrine, which he had taught them, and seriously expostulating with them on the subject; he alledges, for the refutation of their error, and for their conviction of the truth, the memorable case of Abraham. *Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen also, through faith, preached the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* As it is, therefore, a matter, which ought to be well understood, that all who are of faith are the children of Abraham; so, it is equally certain, that they are blessed with him. As he was justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, so also are they. As the law, indeed, requires perfect obedience, and pronounces its curse against every one who continueth not in all things, which are written in it, to do them; it is exceedingly plain, that none of mankind, all of whom are transgressors, can ever be justified by the deeds of the law. But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that through him the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles; that we also might receive the promise of the spirit, through faith.

Brethren, says the apostle, *I speak after the manner of men*: I will illustrate the argument by a familiar case:

Though it be but a MAN'S covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now, to apply the case, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; Not, indeed, to seeds as of many, or as if different sorts were intended, some believers, and some unbelievers, some to be justified by faith, and some by the deeds of the law; but to seed, as intending but one sort or description, namely, Christ in person, and all true believers as included and blessed in him.* But if the promises were made to Abraham and his seed: if THE COVENANT, which respected him and all true believers, and which insured their justification by faith, was confirmed by God in Christ; then, it is manifest, that these promises, THIS COVENANT, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul. The law was not intended to exhibit the terms of justification before God; these were fixed in the covenant made with Abraham, and were not to be altered. The law is not against the promises of God; but it was added because of transgression; and was intended to convince those who were under it of sin, to shew them the impossibility of their own works, and as a schoolmaster to direct them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. But now, since faith is come, or since Christ the object of faith has appeared, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, we are no longer, in the sense that the Jews formerly were, under a schoolmaster. The darkness is past and the true light now shineth. There is no longer a distinction of nations, conditions or sexes, in respect to the privileges and blessings of the covenant. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; FOR YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. AND IF YE BE CHRIST'S, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING

* Compare verse 16, with verses 7 and 26, with our text, and other parallel passages.

TO THE PROMISE. If ye be Christ's, then are ye brought into a covenant relation to Abraham; are justified in the same manner in which he was; and are entitled to all the privileges and blessings, which were contained in the promises made to him and his seed.

Such, my brethren, is the train of reasoning employed by the apostle in this instructive chapter. It is particularly to be remarked, that with a view to convince his Galatian brethren of their unhappy error, in respect to justification, he ascends to the memorable period of the institution of the church in the family of Abraham; takes THE COVENANT, then made with ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED, and traces it down, in the transmission of its privileges and blessings, to the Gentile churches. His whole argument proceeds on the plain scripture ground, that THE COVENANT, which was made with Abraham, and which constituted the church in his family, was still in force, and was never to be abrogated; that the Gentile churches were embraced in THAT COVENANT, as making one with the Jewish church; and that, by virtue of THAT COVENANT, believers of every age and nation were to be considered as the children of Abraham, inheriting by divine right, all the privileges and blessings comprised in the promises made to him and his seed. The text, then, thus contemplated in its connection, presents, for our consideration, this great and interesting doctrine, viz.—

IN GOD'S COVENANT OF PROMISE WITH ABRAHAM, PROVISION WAS MADE FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF THE CHURCH FORMED BY IT, AND THUS FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS CONTAINED IN IT, FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION, DOWN TO THE CLOSE OF TIME.

With a view to establish and illustrate this doctrinal

proposition, I propose, as the general method of discourse,

I. To shew, that the covenant which was made with Abraham, and by which the church was formed in his family, was intended to be perpetual, or to continue throughout all generations : And,

II. To shew more particularly, what provision was made in that covenant for the continuance of the church formed by it, and the transmission of the blessings contained in it.

It cannot be necessary, in a labored manner, to prove, that, by the covenant made with Abraham, a church was formed in his family. Of this fact, as it may appear in the course of our subject, the scriptures afford the most plenary evidence. To Abraham and his seed in the line of Isaac and Jacob, *pertained*, as the apostle to the Romans assures us, *the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*. More than what is here expressed certainly could not be necessary to constitute a church in the strictest sense. Accordingly, though the term church is not used in the old testament scriptures, yet other terms of equivalent import are abundantly used. And in the new testament the body of God's ancient acknowledged people, constituted by the covenant made with Abraham, is expressly recognized as a church. It was thus recognized by Stephen, when, in his memorable address before the Jewish Sanhedrim, speaking of Moses, he said, *This is he, THAT WAS IN THE CHURCH in the wilderness, with the angel that spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers ; who received the lively oracles to give unto us.**

* Acts vii. 38.

That the covenant made with Abraham, and constituting a church in his family, was intended to continue, and actually did continue, until the coming of Messiah, and the introduction of the Gospel dispensation, is conceded on all hands. It will be, moreover, conceded, that if it did not cease, on the introduction of the gospel dispensation, it is still in force ; and consequently the church formed by it still continues, and will continue to the end of time. It might, therefore, suffice for our present purpose should it be made to appear, that the covenant with Abraham and his seed did not cease, when the gospel dispensation was introduced. But this, and more than this, it is believed, will be made clearly to appear.

Several arguments in support of the proposition, that the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, and consequently the church formed by it, did not cease, on the introduction of the gospel dispensation, but were intended to continue throughout all generations, I will now, my brethren, submit to your serious consideration :

1. By the covenant made with Abraham, he was constituted THE FATHER of all them that believe.

Abraham was, unquestionably, a man of pre-eminent faith. But it was not on account of the pre-eminence of his faith, simply, that he obtained the title of the father of the faithful. This venerable title, bestowed upon him by the Spirit of inspiration, is of a much higher import, than merely that he was an eminent exemplar of faith. *As for me*, says God to Abraham, *behold my covenant is with thee, and THOU SHALT BE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS.** This is explained, in the fourth of Romans, as referring, not merely to Abraham's natural posterity ; but also to his children *by faith*. *Therefore it is of faith*, says the apostle, *that it might be by grace*,

* Gen. xvii. 4.

TO THE END THE PROMISE MIGHT BE SURE TO ALL THE SEED, NOT TO THAT ONLY WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT TO THAT ALSO WHICH IS OF THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM, WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL, *as it is written*, I HAVE MADE THEE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS. Here we are taught, that the covenant of promise, made with Abraham, had respect to other seed besides his natural posterity; and *by that covenant* he was constituted the father of all them that believe. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised; FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.*

But, my brethren, in what respect was Abraham constituted the father of all who believe? Certainly it was a constitution of very high import, or it would not have been attended with so remarkable a solemnity, nor have been referred to by the sacred writers with so great an interest. But what was its import? If the covenant made with Abraham has been disannulled, and the church formed by it, abolished; if, on the introduction of the Christian dispensation, a new church was formed, and a new covenant instituted, materially different from that made with Abraham; in what important respect can Abraham be considered as the father of christian believers? If we be members of a different church, formed by a different covenant from that of Abraham, what relation have we to Abraham? In what respect are we his children? How is it that we are blessed with him? that we are heirs according to the promise made to him? and that on his account, as our father, righteousness is imputed unto us?

But Abraham *was* made the father of many nations; and all who are of faith *are* his children, and *are* blessed with him. This is according to the covenant of promise

which God made with Abraham. *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised,* THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED, though they be not his natural posterity, THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED TO THEM ALSO.

By the covenant, made with Abraham, a church was formed, which was to be continued down, through all successive generations, and which was to embrace, not only his natural posterity, but the faithful of all nations. Of this church Abraham was the covenant father; and, in the capacity of covenant father, he received the promises. As the father of the church, and *the heir of the world*, the whole inheritance was conveyed to him for himself and his seed; and the act of conveyance was solemnly ratified and sealed, by the sign of circumcision. The covenant made with him had respect to the whole church, of which he was the representative and father; and the blessings of the covenant were to be transmitted to the latest generations.

In this view of the subject, Abraham appears to be the father of the faithful, in a respect exceedingly interesting and important. In this view of the subject, it is easy to see how the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles: how all who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham; and, partly at least, in what sense, if we be Christ's we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But in any other view, these scripture representations will appear, it is thought, comparatively unmeaning and unimportant, if not utterly unintelligible and incongruous.

On the whole, it is plain, that IT WAS BY THE COVENANT OF PROMISE which God made with him, that A-

braham was constituted the father of all who believe ; and believers of every age and nation are his children, and heirs according to the promise, ONLY BY VIRTUE OF THEIR COVENANT RELATION TO HIM. And from this, the conclusion is equally plain, that the covenant made with Abraham, and consequently the church constituted by it, did not cease on the introduction of the gospel dispensation ; but were intended to be continued to the latest periods of time. For, if believers, to the latest periods of time, are to be accounted children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise made to him ; then the covenant, by virtue of which they become children and heirs, and consequently the church formed by it, must continue.

2. God's covenant of promise made with Abraham comprised all the blessings and privileges ever promised to believers, and to the church.

I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, says the Lord to Abraham, *for an everlasting covenant,* TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE :*—AND IN THEE, AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.† These promises, my brethren, are of vast comprehension. As they respect Abraham and his seed, in their personal and family capacity, they comprise every personal and family blessing, pertaining both to the life which now is, and to that which is to come. As they respect Abraham and his seed in their *church* capacity, they comprise the Messiah, and all the blessings ever to be conferred upon the church and upon the world through him.

To Abraham and his seed, says the apostle, *were the*

* Gen. xvii. 7. † Ibid, xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. xxvi. 4. and xxviii. 14.

promises made. TO ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED, comprehending MESSIAH, and all true believers as included in him, were made the promises, which comprise all the blessings ever to be conferred upon the church and people of God.

Was this covenant, then, so vastly comprehensive in respect to its blessings, ever to be abrogated? Was the church which was formed by it, and so richly endowed, ever to be abolished? Was there to be another covenant, comprising more and greater blessings? another church, more largely and richly endowed? No, my brethren; another covenant, comprising more and greater blessings, could not be constituted; another church, more largely and richly endowed, could not be formed. It is true, indeed, that under the gospel the church enjoys greater privileges than it could enjoy under the law. So in the days of Moses and Joshua the church enjoyed greater privileges than it did in the days of Abraham and Isaac; and in the days of David and Solomon, greater than in the days of Moses and Joshua; and in the days of Christ and his apostles, greater than in the days of David and Solomon. And in the days of the Millennium, the church will enjoy greater privileges than at present it enjoys. But, all the privileges ever enjoyed, and ever to be enjoyed, by the church, were comprised in God's covenant of promise with Abraham; and, in pursuance of that covenant, have been conferred, and will be conferred, from period to period, according to the progression of the great work of redemption, and the advancement of the church towards its ultimate perfection.

Accordingly the sacred writers, not only in the old testament, but also in the new, constantly recur to the covenant with Abraham, as the grand source of all the blessings, and the grand charter of all the privileges of the people and church of God, as well under the Chris-

tian, as under the Jewish, dispensation. *He hath holpen his servant Israel*, says the mother of our Lord, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*, says Zacharias, *for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham. Ye are the children of the prophets*, says Peter to the multitude assembled at the beautiful gate of the temple, *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*, says Paul, *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. And if ye be Christ's, ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Thus it appears that Israel was *holpen* by the coming of Messiah, IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE MERCY PROMISED TO ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED FOREVER. The horn of salvation, raised up in the house of David, even CHRIST, WAS ONLY TO PERFORM THE MERCY PROMISED TO THE FATHERS IN THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. All the kindreds of the earth are blessed under the gospel, ONLY IN PURSUANCE OF THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. The blessings which come upon the Gentiles through Christ, ARE ONLY THE BLESSINGS COMPRISED IN THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. The inheritance was given to Abraham, as the father of the Church, and the heir of the world, IN THE PROMISE TO HIM; and believers under the gospel, as the children of Abraham, are heirs, ONLY ACCORDING TO THE COVENANT WHICH GOD MADE WITH

* Luke i. 54, 55. Ibid, 68—73. Acts iii. 25. Context and Text.

HIM, AND INHERIT ONLY THE BLESSINGS OF THAT COVENANT.

Was the covenant made with Abraham, then, ever to be abrogated? No, my brethren, to abrogate that covenant were to abrogate the grand charter of all the blessings and privileges of God's people. Was the church formed by that covenant ever to be abolished? No; to abolish that church, were to abolish the kingdom and glory of Messiah. Was there ever to be another covenant instituted, and another church formed? No, for all the promises of God are made to Abraham and his seed; all the blessings of Messiah and his kingdom are secured and entailed by covenant, and by oath, to the church formed in Abraham's family, and can never be alienated. The numerous and precious promises, recorded in the Psalms and in the Prophets, concerning the glory of Christ and the extension and blessings of his kingdom, are only an unfolding in detail of the promises of the covenant with Abraham. They are addressed to Jacob, to Israel, to Zion, to the church originally formed in Abraham's family; and as they can never belong to any other covenant, nor be applied to any other church, they afford the most plenary assurance, that the Abrahamic covenant and church shall continue, as long as the sun and moon endure.*

* As nothing could be more unfounded, so what could be more derogative of the honor of the God of Abraham, than the sentiment that the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, was only a *temporal* covenant, and included only *temporal* blessings! Have not temporal blessings been bestowed upon mankind universally; and, upon many, in as great abundance, as upon the patriarch and his descendants? Why then may not Jehovah be said to have been a God to all the individuals and families of the earth, as well as to Abraham and his seed?

But at the same time that we are told, that the covenant with Abraham was only a *temporal* covenant, including only *temporal* blessings; we are also told, that the great promise of this covenant, to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him, had respect, not to his natural, but only to his *spiritual* seed. A SPIRITUAL seed; but a merely TEMPORAL covenant and mere-

3. The covenant, made with Abraham and his seed, is the covenant of which, in the new testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator, and which is designated as the covenant to be established with the church in the days of the gospel.

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts; AND I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE TO ME A PEOPLE.†

This is called, indeed, a new covenant: and on this account has sometimes, for want of proper attention to the subject, been supposed to be different from any covenant before established with the church. It is called a new covenant, because of its revival and renewal, after it had been for a long time greatly obscured, and almost lost out of sight, by the legal Jews, who placed their chief dependence, on the law of Moses, *the covenant made with their fathers at Mount Sinai, when the Lord brought them out of the land of Egypt*; and because of its new and greater clearness, and extension, under a new,

ly TEMPORAL blessings! Yes; to the father of the faithful, and to believers of every nation and age, God only promised to give them the land of Canaan for a possession! Such, according to the Antipædobaptist theory, such is the blessing of Abraham which was to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ! Such is the inheritance, which was given by promise to the patriarch of the church: and to which those who are Christ's are, by covenant and by oath, made heirs; Alas! believer, child of Abraham, heir according to the promise; how greatly hast thou been deceived in respect to the inheritance! But is this a just account of the matter? Can it be admitted for a moment? Should we not indeed, be ready to conclude, that it was in view of some sentiment like this now in question, that the apostle of the Gentiles, jealous for the honor of his God, and the God of his father Abraham, so explicitly protested, that the patriarch and his faithful seed *desire a BETTER country, that is, an HEAVENLY*; and therefore, that *God is NOT ASHAMED to be called THEIR God, FOR HE HATH PREPARED FOR THEM A CITY!*

† Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

and brighter, and more extended, dispensation. So the great commandment of love, *which was from the beginning*, is, under the gospel, called a *NEW commandment*; because *the darkness is past and the true light now shineth*.* The Sinai covenant, *the Mosaic law of commandments contained in ordinances*, as it was *added* but for temporary purposes, has waxed old, and is vanished away. But the covenant originally made with Abraham and his seed, as the permanent constitution of the church, will never wax old, but will always be new.

As the Lord said to Abraham, *I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee—to BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE*; so he said to Israel in Egypt, *I WILL TAKE YOU TO ME FOR A PEOPLE AND I WILL BE TO YOU A GOD* :† and so he said concerning the house of Israel, and the house of Judah in the days of the Gospel; *I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts*; AND *I WILL BE THEIR GOD AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE*. The covenant, or the great and leading promise of the covenant, as expressed in these several instances, is the same. In the last instance, indeed, there is an intimation of a renewal of heart, in those, with whom the covenant is established. The same also, was intimated, at the first establishment of the covenant with Abraham and his seed, by the sign of circumcision, which was *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, and a sacrament significant of a renovation of heart, or *a new creature*. For *the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith*.‡ Accordingly in the old testament a renovation of heart, or inward conformity to the law of God, is abundantly inculcated; and the promise of the Spirit to God's covenant people, and to their seed for

* John ii. 7, 8.

† Exod. ii. 7.

‡ Rom. iv. 13.

this purpose, is often repeated. And in the new testament we are taught, that the promise of the Spirit, was included in the covenant with Abraham, or in that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. Thus we read in our context ; *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ;* THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH FAITH.

On the slightest inspection it is plain, that the covenant, mentioned in the several instances now before us, is one and the same. In the first instance it was established with Abraham and his seed : comprising the church under every dispensation, to the end of time. In the second instance it was propounded to the nation of Israel in Egypt ; comprising, at that period, the body of Abraham's seed, and therefore of the church. In the last instance it was propounded anew to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah under the gospel, as the covenant to be continued with the church in gospel times. And in each of the instances, the great promise is, TO BE A GOD TO THE CHURCH, AND TO THE SEED OF THE CHURCH. For as in the first instance the covenant was established with Abraham and his seed ; so in the second, it was made with the nation of Israel, including their little ones ; and in the last, with the HOUSE of Israel : And it is well understood that the term HOUSE, when used in this sense, always comprises both parents and children.

This is the covenant, of which CHRIST is the MEDIATOR, and which is said to be *a better covenant, established upon better promises*, than that which was added to it, and made with Israel at Mount Sinai. This is the covenant which was to be continued with the church, after the Sinai covenant had waxed old and vanished away.

Accordingly, Peter, as before quoted, says, *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.* This address, it will be remembered, was made to the people, after the ascension of the Saviour, on the full risen morning of the gospel day. In another address, delivered about the same time, the same apostle says; *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.** In this passage, as well as in the former, there is a most evident allusion to the covenant made with Abraham. *The promise is to you and to your children;* for the Lord said to Abraham, *I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.* It is also, *to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call;* for the Lord said further to Abraham, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* But, my brethren, if this covenant with Abraham and his seed, was abolished on the coming of Messiah, and was to have no existence under the gospel; why is it in this solemn manner, on the bright morning of the gospel day, brought forward by this distinguished apostle, made the basis of his exhortation to the people, and referred to as the very source of all the blessings to them and their children, and to all the nations of the earth?

In our context, as we have already seen, as well as in the passage just quoted from his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul treats most explicitly of the covenant with Abraham and his seed, as being the constitution of the church in gospel times. He declares it to be a covenant, confirmed in Christ, and which could not be

* Acts ii. 38, 39.

disannulled ; and refers the churches to it as their grand and unalterable charter.

In the fourth chapter of this same epistle to the Galatians, the apostle again brings forward the covenant as the basis of his argument. *It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh ; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory ; for these are the two covenants ; the one from mount Sina, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar, or the bond woman. For this Agar is, allegorically, mount Sina in Arabia, where this covenant was given, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children ; or to the unbelieving Jews, who, through their blind adherence to this Sinai covenant, are in bondage with their children to the weak and beggarly elements. But Jerusalem which is above, the true and spiritual church of God, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, but principally hitherto of Jews, is free, which is the mother of us all, as Sarah, the free woman was of Isaac. Now we, brethren, we Gentile believers, as well as Jewish, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

The two covenants, allegorically represented, the one by the free woman, and the other by the bond woman, are evidently the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, and the covenant which was added at mount Sinai. For these are the covenants of which the apostle had been largely treating in the preceding chapter, and with reference to which he continues his discourse in this ; and of no other covenant is there any mention made throughout this epistle. The bond woman represented the covenant at mount Sinai, which is cast out and abolished. But the free woman represented

the gracious covenant of promise, according to which Isaac was born, and became an heir of the blessing.— This covenant is not cast out, is not abolished ; but still continues in all its vigor, and in all its glory. *So then, brethren,* concludes the apostle, *we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free.* We are not children of the covenant made at Sinai, and allegorically represented by Hagar, the bond woman ; but we are children of the covenant, originally established with Abraham and his seed, and allegorically represented by Sarah, the free woman.*

So plain from the scriptures it is, that the covenant made with Abraham is continued under the gospel ; and therefore, that the church formed by it is also still continued.

4. The church under the gospel is uniformly in the scriptures represented as being the same church, or a continuation of the same church, which was formed in the family of Abraham.

It would be very remarkable, indeed, if this were not

* It is often represented, that the believers in the Abrahamic covenant are adherents to the law of Moses. Such a representation has no shadow of foundation in truth. The law of Moses, we, as well as our opponents, believe, has been blotted out and nailed to the cross. But because the Mosaic law, the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, is abolished, it by no means follows, that the Abrahamic covenant is also abolished. Between these two covenants the scripture uniformly observes a most important distinction ; and while it informs us that the former is abolished, it informs us also, and with equal clearness, that the latter is not. The unscriptural blending of these two covenants together has been a most prolific source of error. From this source sprang the error of the legal Jews, in former ages ; and from this same source has sprung the error of the deniers of the Abrahamic covenant and church, or the Antipædobaptists, in modern times. It was with his eye upon this source of error, that our Lord, when, in discourse with the Jews, he took occasion to mention *circumcision*, the original seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was particular to remind them, that *it was not of Moses, but of the fathers.* *John vii. 22.*

the case. It would be very remarkable indeed, if, in the scriptures, Abraham and his seed were represented as making two, or more, distinct and quite different families; or if the children of Abraham, under the gospel, who are only heirs according to the promise made to him, were represented as composing a church, entirely distinct and different from that which was founded in the family of their father. But such a representation is, in the scriptures, no where to be found.

All the predictions and prophecies of good things to come, addressed, in the Psalms and in the Prophets, to the church under the former dispensation, but to have their completion under the gospel, most clearly represent the Christian, as being only a continuation and enlargement of the ancient Abrahamic, church. Of innumerable passages to this effect, the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, the whole of which is in point, but a part of which only can be cited, may suffice as a specimen. *Arise, shine; for THY light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon THEE. And the Gentiles shall come to THY light, and kings to the brightness of THY rising. Lift up THINE eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to THEE; THY sons shall come from far, and THY daughters shall be nursed at thy side. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto THEE, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto THEE. They shall come up with acceptance upon mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto THEE, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call THEE THE ZION OF THE LORD OF HOSTS. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated so that no man went through thee, I will make THEE AN ETERNAL EXCELLENCY, a joy of many generations.—* These gracious promises were addressed to Zion, to the church of the living God, under the ancient dispensa-

tion; about seven hundred years before the coming of Messiah; but they evidently look forward to the bright and glorious days, yea, even to the brightest and most glorious days, of the gospel. To this same Zion assurances were given, that HER light should come, and the glory of the Lord should rise upon HER. That the Gentiles should come to HER light, and kings to the brightness of HER rising. That the abundance of the sea should be converted unto HER, and the forces of the Gentiles come unto HER. That SHE should be called THE Zion of the Lord of hosts; and that SHE should be made an ETERNAL EXCELLENCY, a joy of many generations.

Can we refrain from astonishment, my brethren, when we hear it said, that this ancient church of God, this Zion of the Lord of hosts, concerning which such glorious things are spoken, was no church, or at best, was only a shadow or type of the Christian church? Can we refrain from astonishment, when we hear it said, that this same Zion, which was to be made an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations, and unto which the forces of the Gentiles were to come, has long since ceased to exist, and given place to an entirely new church? Is it not certain, beyond all contradiction, that, if there be no failure in the promises of God, the ancient Zion still exists, and has been enlarged by accessions from the Gentile nations; and will continue to exist and to be enlarged, until every nation and kingdom, which will not serve her, shall have utterly perished? And is it not equally certain, that if there has been any other church formed, under whatever name, and with whatever pretensions; it is a church which was entirely unknown in ancient prophecy as a true church of God, and which must ere long come to a perpetual end?

The representations in the new testament, concerning the church, are perfectly correspondent with those in the old.

*Not as though the word of God, says the apostle, had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Know ye not, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** From these passages, and many others of similar import, it appears, that believing Gentiles, as well as believing Jews, are the covenant seed of Abraham, and members of the same church of which he was the father.

I say, then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham. God hath not cast away his people, whom he foreknew. Blindness in part is, indeed, happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. But if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.† In the eleventh of Jeremiah the Jewish, or Abrahamic, church is called *a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit*; and under this beautiful figure is it represented by the apostle, in the passage now cited from the eleventh of Romans. This good olive tree, according to the apostle's representation, did not die, on the introduction of the gospel dispensation; but still had root, and life, and fatness. But some of the natural branches, a great proportion, indeed, of the Jews, visible members of the church, natural branches of the olive tree, were, by reason of unbelief, at that time bro-

* Romans ix. 6—8. Context and Text.

† Romans xi. 1, 2, 25; 17, 18.

ken off ; and the Gentile believers were grafted in among the still remaining natural and flourishing branches of the same olive tree, and became partakers of its root and fatness.

This, my brethren, is far from representing the ancient Abrahamic church as abolished, and a new church formed. It, indeed, represents, in a manner at once the most beautiful and the most striking, that the Abrahamic church was continued in its true character ; and that the Gentile believers were brought into the same church, and admitted to a participation of the same privileges and blessings. And, what is particularly noticeable, the Gentile believers are solemnly cautioned against thinking too meanly of the Jews, and too highly of themselves ; and are admonished to bear it in remembrance, that they, by special favor, were admitted to the privileges and blessings of that covenant and church, from which the unbelieving Jews were broken off. **BOAST NOT AGAINST THE BRANCHES ; BUT IF THOU BOAST, THOU BEAREST NOT THE ROOT, BUT THE ROOT THEE.** Thou contributest nothing to Abraham and his descendants, but derivest all thy privileges and blessings from the covenant which was made with them !*

The apostle proceeds to inform us, that the Abrahamic church, thus continued down, and enlarged by the ac-

* It is here submitted to the serious and candid consideration of the reader, whether those who deny, or disclaim, the Abrahamic covenant and church, are not chargeable with the very thing, against which the apostle has entered his most solemn and pointed premonition ? Do they not *boast against the branches* ? Do they not boast, and claim a high preeminence indeed, over the whole ancient church, both branch and root ; and over all the gospel branches, which acknowledge that church, as the stock into which they are engrafted, and of the root and fatness of which they have the privilege to partake ? And if so, does it not behove them to attend, with awe, to the warning which the apostle subjoins : *Be not high minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

cession of the Gentile believers, is to continue until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in. Then the natural branches shall be engrafted again into their own olive tree. The Jews shall be reinstated in the church, and in all the privileges of the covenant made with Abraham their father.

So plain it is, that the church under the Christian dispensation, is only the ancient, Abrahamic, church continued and enlarged according to the promises, made to Abraham and his seed; and that this church, and, of course, the covenant by which it was originally formed, is to be continued down to the latest generations. So plain it is, that, as the apostle to the Ephesians expresses it, *the Gentiles are fellow heirs, AND OF THE SAME BODY, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.** Accordingly, as intimated under the former article, in all the predictions and promises, uttered by the prophets, concerning the extension and blessings of Messiah's kingdom under the gospel; this kingdom is designated by the names JACOB, ISRAEL, ZION, JERUSALEM, the well known names of the ancient Jewish, or Abrahamic, church.

5. The covenant, made with Abraham, is expressly declared to be an everlasting, or perpetual covenant; a covenant to continue to the latest generations.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. It is well understood, that the term, EVERLASTING, when used in a limited sense, imports a duration, equal to that of the subject, to which it is applied. When the Lord, therefore, testified, that he would establish his covenant with Abraham and his seed

* Eph. iii. 6.

after him, for an EVERLASTING COVENANT; he was, doubtless, understood to mean, that, as long as Abraham should have a seed on the earth, this covenant should continue. That he was thus to be understood is further manifest, from the very noticeable phrase, IN THEIR GENERATIONS. *I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee,* IN THEIR GENERATIONS, FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT. This certainly imports that the covenant was to continue, even to the latest generations of Abraham's seed.

But it already appears, that in some sense, and that too the covenant sense of the terms, believers of every nation and of every age, as well as his natural posterity, are Abraham's seed. If, therefore, God meant to establish his covenant with Abraham and with his seed after him, in their generations for an everlasting covenant; then, according to the very terms of the covenant, as long as there is a generation of Abraham's seed on the earth, this covenant is to continue. If there were in the apostolic age, true believers in Christ, they were a generation of Abraham's seed; and the covenant established with Abraham and with his seed after him, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, was established with them. If there be in the present age true believers in Christ, they are a generation of Abraham's seed; and the covenant established with Abraham and with his seed after him, in their generations, is established with them. And if there shall be in the last age of the world true believers in Christ, they will be a generation of Abraham's seed; and the covenant established with Abraham and with his seed after him, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, will be established with them.

The text now before us is not the only one, in which the covenant with Abraham is declared to be an everlasting

covenant. *Sarah thy wife*, said the Lord to Abraham, *shall have a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac ; and I will establish my covenant with him,* FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, AND WITH HIS SEED AFTER HIM. *O ye seed of Israel his servant*, says David, *ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God. His judgments are in all the earth. Be ye mindful alway of his covenant, the word which he commanded TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS ; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac, and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an EVERLASTING COVENANT.*

Such, my hearers, is a compendious view of the scripture proofs that the covenant, which was made with Abraham, and by which the church was constituted in his family, was intended to be perpetual, or to continue throughout all generations. I say, a compendious view, for in order to give an ample and complete view, we should be obliged to present the whole scriptures in their connexion. The whole scriptures, in their connexion, testify, that Abraham is, under God, the father of the church ; that to him and his seed all the promises were made ; that the church, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, is one ; that the covenant confirmed in Christ, with Abraham and his seed, four hundred and thirty years before the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation, was never to be disannulled ; and, therefore, that *if ye be Christ's, then*, by virtue of that covenant, *ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** All this will, perhaps, be made to appear with

* By some it may be thought, that, on this first general head, we have dwelt longer than was necessary on a proposition so plain. But when it is considered, that the doctrine here in proof is at the foundation of the dispute between the pædobaptists and the antipædobaptists, and that, if this doctrine be proved, the pædobaptist sentiment and practice must be allowed to rest on the most solid ground ; it is hoped that the several arguments

still greater clearness, by what is to be offered under the other general head ; which is,

II. To consider more particularly what provision was made in the Abrahamic covenant, for the continuance of the church formed by it, and the transmission of the blessings contained in it.

God's gracious promise to be a God to Abraham and his seed after him, in their generations, evidently purported, that the blessings of the covenant should be transmitted from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, and so down from generation to generation, in the line of natural descent. That this great promise had primary respect to Abraham's natural posterity is manifest from the very terms in which it is expressed ; from the application of the token or seal of the covenant ; from the general tenor of the scriptures ; and from the well known course of the divine dispensations.

The covenant with Abraham contained the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. As a provision for the life which now is, and as an earnest of the blessings of that which is to come, the land of Canaan was particularly promised to him and his seed for an inheritance. As the land of Canaan was a pledge, and an earnest of that better country, which is an heavenly, and of all the blessings promised in the covenant ; it is in several instances, by a common and beautiful figure, put for the whole of those blessings. But the promise of the land of Canaan had respect, unquestionably, to Abraham's natural seed ; and, therefore, as God promised to be a God to that same seed, to which he

adduced, will not only be *read once*, but if necessary will be patiently and candidly *reviewed*, before the reader proceeds any further. Are not the arguments scriptural and fair ? Is not each of them by itself conclusive ? And do not all of them together establish the doctrine beyond all reasonable controversy ?

would give the land of Canaan, it is plain that all the promises of the covenant had primary respect to Abraham's natural descendants. *I will give unto thee, and to THY SEED after thee, all the land of Canaan, and I will be THEIR God.**

Circumcision, originally the token and seal of the covenant, was, by divine appointment, put upon Abraham's natural seed. But why was the token and seal of the covenant put upon them; if to them the promise of the covenant had no primary, no special respect?

The apostle Peter, in his before cited address to the people, at the Beautiful gate of the temple, says, *Ye are the children of the prophets, AND OF THE COVENANT which God made with our fathers; saying, unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Unto YOU FIRST, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* Thus, addressing himself to a promiscuous multitude of the natural descendants of Abraham, the apostle testified to them, that they were the children of the covenant; and that, on this account, unto them first God had sent his Son Jesus to bless them. This plainly imports that the promises of the covenant, even the promises of spiritual blessings had primary respect to Abraham's natural posterity. Paul, in the ninth of Romans, says, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, FOR MY BRETHREN, MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH. WHO ARE ISRAELITES; TO WHOM PERTAINETH THE ADOPTION, AND THE GLORY, AND THE COVENANTS, AND THE PROMISES.* But how could he thus say, if the promises of the covenant had not a primary respect to Abraham's natural posterity? It is, indeed, on the ground, that the promises of the covenant

* Gen. xvii. 8.

had a primary respect to Abraham's natural posterity, that the apostle's whole argument, throughout this and the two succeeding chapters, evidently proceeds. But the passage in the eleventh chapter, respecting the olive tree, is peculiarly clear and decisive. In that passage the Jews are represented as being NATURAL branches of the good olive tree, and the Gentile believers as only ENGRAFTED branches. But what pertinency or justness could there be in this representation, if the covenant with Abraham had no special, no primary respect to his natural descendants ?

As the sentiment, now in proof, runs through the whole scriptures ; so it is most strongly confirmed by the divine dispensations. For nearly two thousand years, the blessings of the covenant, transmitted from generation to generation, were almost wholly confined to Abraham's natural seed. To them God said, *You only have I known of all the nations of the earth.* Though, at the time of the introduction of the Christian dispensation, a great proportion of the natural branches were broken off from the good olive tree ; yet there was still a precious remnant spared. Though *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in ;* though, *as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for the Gentiles' sakes ;* yet, *as touching the election, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes.* And the time is at hand, when as a body, they are to be brought into the faith of the gospel, and reinstated in all the privileges of the everlasting covenant.*

God's promise, then, or proposal, to Abraham, was to be a God, not only to him, but also to his seed after him. The same was his promise, or proposal, to Isaac ; the same, to Jacob ; and so down from generation to gene-

* Rom. xi. 23—32.

ration ; and thus in the line of natural descent, were the blessings of the covenant to be transmitted and the church continued.

But though the promise of the covenant had *primary* respect to Abraham's natural posterity ; yet Abraham was *made the father of many nations* ; and had the promise, that *in him, and in his seed, all the families of the earth should be blessed*. Though the church was to be continued down in the line of his natural descendents ; yet provision was made for the adoption and incorporation of other families and nations. Accordingly, under the former dispensation, strangers of different nations were admitted to the privileges of natural born Israelites ; and on the introduction of the present dispensation, Gentile believers, by hundreds and by thousands, were admitted to the same covenant, and became *fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of the same promise by the gospel*.

As Abraham was constituted *the father of all them that believe* ; so, correlatively, believers of every nation and age, though not his *natural*, are yet his *adopted* and covenant children ; and as such are to be admitted to all the privileges and blessings of his natural children of promise. As, therefore, God promised, or proposed, to Abraham to be not only his God, but also the God of his seed ; so he now promises, or proposes, to every believing parent to be, not only a God to him, but also to his seed after him ; and the same promise, or proposal, to believing parents is to continue down from generation to generation, to the latest periods. Accordingly, Peter, when addressing the mixed multitude, who on the day of pentecost were pricked in their hearts, called upon them to *repent and be baptized* ; and that he might present the strongest motive, he added, *For the promise*

is to you, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.

But it is here, my brethren, to be particularly noted, that the promises of the covenant, though in respect to Christ and his church, as a body, absolute; yet in respect to individual persons, are conditional. It was on the ground of Abraham's faith and uprightness, that God promised to be a God to him; and it was on the same general ground, that he promised to be a God to his seed. *Walk before me*, said God to Abraham, *and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant between me and thee.** To become entitled, then, to the blessings of the covenant, Abraham must walk before God, and be perfect; must have true faith, and be sincerely obedient. This was necessary, as it respected himself personally, and equally necessary, as it respected his children.

The promise to be a God to his children, was not in such a sense absolute, as that God was engaged to be their God, whether Abraham believingly took hold of the promise, and was faithful in respect to it or not: but if Abraham would become entitled to the promise, he must believe in it, and practise in conformity to it.—Hence, God said of Abraham, *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.†* It was on the ground of Abraham's known fidelity, that God thus testified concerning his children, that they *should keep the way of the Lord*, and that the blessings promised to Abraham should come upon him. Agreeably to this, God said to Isaac, *I will be with thee, and will bless thee; and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven; and*

* Gen. xvii. 1, 2.

† Ibid. xviii. 19.

will give unto thy seed all these countries, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. BECAUSE THAT ABRAHAM OBEYED MY VOICE, AND KEPT MY CHARGE, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS.* From this it is plain, that it was in consequence of Abraham's faith and fidelity, that God was a God to Isaac and established with him his covenant.

In the ninth of Romans, the apostle anticipates an objection to this effect, that if God should reject the nation of the Jews, as had before been intimated, he would not be faithful to his covenant with Abraham, respecting his seed. To obviate this objection, he says, *They are not all Israel, who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children.* There are many of Abraham's descendants, who, though members of the visible church, are not the true people of God; and there are many of Abraham's seed, who, though visibly Children of the covenant, are not partakers of covenant blessings. *For they which are the children of the flesh, merely, are not the children of God; but THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE,* the children in respect to whom there is that faith and fidelity, which are the conditions of the promise, ARE COUNTED FOR THE SEED.† From this passage it is, on the one hand, plain, that the promise to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him, had respect, primarily, to his natural descendants; and, on the other hand, it is equally plain, that merely their being the natural descendants of Abraham, did not bring them within the promise. To be children of the promise, they must be children of faith; children, concerning whom

* Gen. xxv, 3, 4, 5.

† Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. This passage though by some thought to militate with our sentiments respecting the covenant, the author cannot but consider as absolutely conclusive in favor of them. If there be no promise to believing parents respecting their children; what then are we to understand by CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE?

there is on the part of the parent, or parents, the faith of Abraham in the covenant of God.

The promise, then, to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him, was of this purport, that on condition of faith and fidelity on Abraham's part, in respect to his children, they should become subjects of grace, and heirs of the blessings of the covenant. The same promise was made to Abraham's posterity in their successive generations; and the same is now made to all true believers, his adopted children, of every nation. This is a special and most important provision, of the Abrahamic covenant, for the transmission of the blessings contained in it, and the continuance of the church formed by it.

It is further to be observed, however, that as Christ is eminently the seed of Abraham, and as Abraham, at the time the covenant was made with him, represented the whole church; the promise of the covenant to Abraham and his seed had respect not merely to individuals, but also to Christ as the Mediator of the covenant, and to the whole church as one in and with him. Hence, though in one respect the promises of the covenant are conditional; yet in another respect they are not. Though in respect to individual believers, the promises are not absolute, but have respect to their faith and fidelity as a condition; yet in respect to Christ, and the Church as one with him, the promises are yea and amen. Though God is not by his covenant, absolutely engaged to give to every believer that faith in the promises respecting his children, which will certainly, through grace, secure to his children, and all of them, the blessings of the covenant; yet he does, it is conceived, stand absolutely engaged, to Christ and the church, to give such a measure of grace and faith as shall preserve in the line of the church, or some part of the church, a righteous seed on the earth. *As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord;*

my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon their offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel. They shall be my people and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, FOR THE GOOD of them and of THEIR CHILDREN after them. These, my brethren, are covenant promises, made in Christ to the Abrahamic church; and are only an exposition, or a more clear and particular expression of the great promises originally made to Abraham and his seed. But they give the most positive assurance that the Lord will always have a faithful seed in the church; and that in consequence of their faith and fidelity the Holy Spirit, in his gracious influences, shall be poured out upon their children; so that there shall be among them also a faithful seed. And thus though many, through unbelief and unfaithfulness, be cut off from the blessings of the covenant; yet in consequence of the faith and fidelity of others, the blessings of the covenant will be transmitted in the line of the church from generation to generation, even unto the last.

The provision, then, in the Abrahamic covenant, for the transmission of its blessings, and the continuance of the church, was a promise to Abraham, and to all believing parents individually, on condition of their faith and fidelity, of renewing grace, and all the blessings of the covenant, to their children; and a promise to Abraham

and his seed, comprising Christ and his church in union, of such a measure of grace and faith as should preserve in the line of the church, a holy and faithful seed on the earth. And to these was annexed a promise that accessions of those, who were strangers and foreigners, should from period to period be made to the church, until the abundance of the sea should be converted unto her, the forces of the Gentiles should come unto her, and all flesh should see the salvation of God.

I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, saith Jehovah, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Thou shalt be a father of many nations : and in thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Accordingly, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

SERMON II.

GALATIANS' III. 29.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the promise.

THE doctrine, my brethren, which was deduced from this text, and to establish and illustrate which was the business of our former discourse, very readily suggests many articles of great practical importance; some of the more prominent of which may be selected for more particular attention and

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We are led to a grateful and devout contemplation of the great design, the gradual progress, and the ultimate extension and glory, of the church of God, originally established in the family of Abraham.

At a period about fifteen hundred years after the creation of the world, *the Lord looked down from heaven upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And the Lord said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them with the earth.* Pursuant to this his righteous determination, after giving them solemn admonition for the space of a hundred and twenty years,

while the ark was in building; he, at length, opened *the windows of heaven*, and broke up *the fountains of the great deep*, and destroyed the whole world of the ungodly with a deluge of waters. From this memorable and awful catastrophe only Noah and his family were saved.

With this righteous and promising stock the world was begun anew. But righteous and promising as the stock was, such is the hereditary depravity of human nature, that in about four hundred and thirty years after the evacuation of the ark, idolatry was so extensively spread among the descendants of Noah, that open defection from the true God and his worship had become almost universal.

At this important æra it pleased God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, to reveal his gracious purpose, which he had purposed in the Messiah, to prevent the utter extinction of the true religion; to preserve to himself a righteous seed, and to uphold the institutions of his worship on the earth, through all succeeding ages, and ultimately to spread the knowledge and glory of his name to all the ends of the world.

In his wise and sovereign manner, he separated Abraham from his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, and led him forth into a land wherein he was a stranger. There he appeared unto Abraham, and gave him renewed intimations of his gracious design; and, in about twenty years afterward, in a formal and solemn manner, established his covenant with him and with his seed after him, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant. In Abraham's family he instituted a visible church; a visibly covenanted and sealed religious body; which was to continue through all generations, and ultimately to embrace *all the families of the earth*. The church, thus instituted, he endowed with

the richest blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal ; blessings not all to be conferred in their full effect at once, but successively, from period to period, as best suited the purposes of infinite wisdom, yet all made sure by *promise* and by *oath*.

Thus solemnly instituted and richly endowed, the church, under special divine protection and guidance, commenced her progress.

The covenant, made with Abraham and his seed, was renewed with Isaac and his seed, and confirmed with Jacob and his seed ; and while, in succession, these venerable patriarchs, during the space of about two hundred years, *dwelt as strangers in a strange land, and removed from one nation to another, and from one kingdom to another people, the Lord suffered no man to do them wrong. Yea he reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. At length Israel went down into Egypt, and Jacob sojourn'd in the land of Ham.*

In Egypt they dwelt for more than two hundred years ; and although, during a great part of that long and dreary interval, they were greatly afflicted and oppressed, yet *the Lord remembered his covenant, and increased his people exceedingly, and made them stronger than their enemies.* In due time their groanings were heard, and the period of their deliverance came. *The Lord sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen ; and they shewed his signs among the Egyptians, and wonders in the land of Ham, until Egypt was glad to let his people depart. With a mighty hand and a stretched out arm, he brought them forth from the house of their bondage. He spread a cloud for their covering, and a fire to give light in the night. The people asked and he brought quails ; and satisfied them with the bread of Heaven. He*

opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; and ran in the dry places like a river. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

Previously to their leaving Egypt, however, the Lord was pleased to institute the passover, to be afterwards observed by his people as another sealing ordinance of his covenant with them. The pascal lamb, at once commemorated the manner of their signal deliverance from Egypt, and prefigured the manner of the great redemption of the whole church, by the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

At Mount Sinai, the Lord appeared in terrible and glorious majesty, and, recognizing the ransomed tribes as the seed of Abraham, renewed with them his covenant; and gave them a code of statutes and ordinances, called also a covenant, which were to continue until Messiah should appear, and the ritual parts of which were prefigurative and typical of good things to come. Here the tabernacle was built, and all the splendid rites of the Mosaic economy were instituted. Here the Lord *taught Jacob his law and Israel his testimonies*. And here he gave to his church a form, and established in it an order and discipline, which were to continue until that which was more perfect should come.

This was an important æra of the church. At this period the great designs of God, and the gracious promises of his covenant, were much more clearly unfolded, than at any former period they had been; and his church received a very great advancement. This was indeed, the commencement of a new dispensation, in many respects exceedingly different from the preceding; but still the church was the same, formed by the same covenant, and continued in the same line of Abraham's seed.

After receiving the law, and the splendid ritual of divine service, the church continued under Moses in the wilderness for the space of about forty years ; removing from place to place, under the miraculous guidance of the pillar of cloud and of fire, and miraculously supported from day to day, by bread from heaven and water from the rock. For forty years *their raiment waxed not old upon them, neither did their shoe wax old upon their foot.* During that remarkable period, they saw the works of the Lord who *led them about and instructed them ;* and from time to time received from him, by the hand of Moses his servant, many important revelations of his will. *But with many of them God was not well pleased.* Provoked by their obstinate perversity and unbelief, *he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest.* Yet though they consumed away under his terrible malediction, and died by hundreds and by thousands, in the wilderness, still he was mindful of his covenant. Tho' multitudes perished in unbelief, God, nevertheless, reserved to himself, even of that generation, a faithful seed ; and upon the generation then rising he graciously granted a remarkable effusion of his Holy Spirit, so that *Israel became holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase.*

Having thus, by his various dispensations, prepared his church for a settled state, the Lord led forth his chosen tribes out of *the great and terrible wilderness,* and by the hand of his servant Joshua, brought them into the promised land. *Nations greater and mightier than they* disappeared before them like the mists of the morning ; the land was divided by lot ; the tabernacle was pitched at Shiloh ; and divine worship was established according to its instituted forms.

Though nearly five hundred years had elapsed, after the covenant was made with Abraham, before Abra-

ham's seed were put in possession of the promised land ; yet God was not unmindful of his covenant, neither was he *slack concerning his promise*. And as the land of Canaan was intended to be a sure pledge, and earnest to the whole church, of all the blessings of the covenant ; so, though in respect to the fulfilment of some of the promises, the time to us seem long ; still he who hath promised is faithful and will certainly perform. As certain as it is that he put his ancient church in possession of the land of Canaan, so certain it is that he will, in due time, fulfil every promise of the covenant, and finally put his whole redeemed church in possession of *that better country which is an heavenly*.

Thus settled in the good land, which God had promised unto their fathers, the church continued with alternate elevations and depressions, but without any very remarkable advancement, for another long period of about four hundred years. But under David and his son Solomon, both eminent types of the Messiah, the church attained to the highest glory, to which it ever attained under the Mosaic dispensation. The school of the prophets was instituted ; great additions were made to the written oracles of truth ; a magnificent temple for the divine honor and service was built at Jerusalem, *the city which God chose to place his name there* ; several important institutions for the improvement of the divine worship were added to those given by Moses ; and the promises and prophecies respecting Messiah and his kingdom became much more particular and clear.

The church, however, still continued the same, though in a very advanced state, and under a very different economy ; and all the blessings, then actually enjoyed, were only bestowed in faithful fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham.

From the memorable and splendid period, now in view, to the appearance of the Messiah, a period of about one thousand years, the church passed through many interesting, but diversified scenes. The division of the tribes of Israel into two distinct kingdoms ; the general apostacies in the days of Athaliah, Ahaz, and Manasseh, and the memorable reformation in the days of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah ; the destruction of the temple, the dispersion and captivity, in the days of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah ; the return, the rebuilding of the temple, and the resettlement of the church and of the worship of God, in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah ; the cruel persecutions and oppressions of the church under Antiochus Epiphanes, and the signal deliverances wrought in her behalf under Judas Maccabeus and his successors ; were all, as they respected the church, very memorable, and important events. But low as the church was at several successive periods reduced, yet she was never destroyed. God remembered his covenant and was gracious. And if the church was not on the whole in other respects advanced ; yet as the time of Messiah drew nearer, the promises made to the fathers, and from time to time renewed and repeated, were more clearly unfolded, and the scene of prophecy became less shadowy and obscure.

At length the long predicted, and long expected æra arrived. All nations were shaken, and *the DESIRE of all nations* came.

In the midst of the church the promised Messiah, the Seed in whom all the blessings of the covenant were comprised, appeared, *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israël ; to perform the mercy promised unto the fathers, and to REMEMBER THE HOLY COVENANT.* On his appearance, the shadows of the Mosaic dispensation fled away ; the law of commandments con-

tained in ordinances was abolished; *the middle wall of partition* between Jews and Gentiles *was broken down*; a new and brighter dispensation was introduced; *the Lord arose upon his church and his glory was seen upon her, and the Gentiles came to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.*

But great as the change at this eventful period was, and glorious as the scene appeared, it was all in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Though a new and a brighter dispensation was introduced, yet the church continued the same, which had almost two thousand years before been established by the covenant made with Abraham and his seed; that covenant which was to continue for perpetual generations, which neither the institution nor the abolition of the Mosaic economy could *disannul*, and by virtue of which *the Gentiles became fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel.*

Thus advanced to a more elevated and improved state, illumined with vastly increased light, and enlarged by the accession of the Gentile nations, the church continued for many years to gain extension and establishment, *lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes.* Founded upon an immoveable rock, she has remained stedfast amidst all the convulsions and revolutions of the world, by which kingdoms and empires have been sunk in ruins. Neither the fury of ten successive persecutions under Pagan Rome, nor the still more sanguinary and persevering violence and machinations of Papal Rome, could overthrow or destroy her. God has remembered his covenant, and the combined powers of earth and hell have exerted themselves in vain. The church is still continued; is extending herself on every side; and is rising in beauty and in glory.

The blessing of Abraham has come upon the present generation: the promises made to him, and from period to period renewed and unfolded to the church, are in a train of rapid and grand accomplishment. And the day, the millennial day, is at hand, when the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom, and the dominion under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high God, and when in Abraham and his seed, all the kindreds and families of the earth shall be blessed.

Such, my brethren, was the great design of the church; such has been its progress; and such are its prospects. Such has been the stability of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, and such his faithfulness to his promises. *If, then, ye be Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*, how firm is the foundation of your hopes; how rich and how durable is your inheritance.

2. From the view which we have taken of the covenant made with Abraham it appears, that this covenant is never *established* with any but true believers, or the subjects of true religion.

God's promise to those with whom this covenant is established is to be a God to them, and to their seed after them. But God is not in this covenant sense a God to any but true believers, or the subjects of true religion. Hence, that he may be a God *to the house of Israel*, or to the church and her seed, he says, *I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts*. This obviously imports all which is understood by the regeneration or renewal of the heart by the Spirit, in righteousness and true holiness; and, therefore, clearly imports that the covenant is *established* only with true believers, or the subjects of true religion.

Abraham was a true believer ; and as a condition on which God would *establish his covenant* with him, to be a God to him and his seed after him, he was required to walk before God and be perfect. Isaac, and after him, Jacob, were also true believers ; and with them, as such, God established his covenant, to be a God to them, and to their seed after them. In after-ages, when God renewed his covenant with the Israelites, the posterity of Abraham, he always required of them, and they always professed to have, a truly obedient and believing heart. It is also particularly observable, that it was *because of unbelief*, that the carcasses of so many thousands fell in the wilderness ; that, a long time afterwards, both Israel and Judah were carried away captive from their land and dispersed among the nations ; and that, finally, so large a proportion of the Jews were broken off from the visible church of God, and rejected from being a people. And under the gospel, it is only true believers, such as are in Christ by faith, who are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

3. It appears that a cordial and obedient belief in all which God has proposed, in his gracious covenant, is of high and everlasting importance.

God's covenant promise, or proposal, my brethren, is to be a God to you, and to your seed after you. If, with a believing and obedient heart, you take hold of his covenant, and give up yourselves to him in Christ, he will be your God ; will give you grace for grace, will bestow upon you every good thing, and will keep you by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. And, if with the same believing and obedient heart, you give up

* Though the covenant is never, on God's part, *established* with any but true believers ; yet all who have taken the vows upon them ought to feel themselves sacredly bound to fulfil their engagements. If they have opened their mouths unto the Lord, they cannot go back.

your *children* to him, he will also be a God to them ; will in due time bestow upon them, in answer to your believing prayers, his renewing grace, *will put his laws into their minds and write them in their hearts*, and will make them heirs of *the righteousness of faith*, and of all the blessings of his gracious and everlasting covenant.

But if you refuse, and continue in unbelief, whatever your profession or visible standing may be, you can have no title to the promises, no real interest in the covenant. If you do not believingly and obediently give up yourselves to him, he will not be your God ; but will regard you as strangers, and foreigners, and enemies. And if you do not believingly and obediently give up your children to him, even though you give up yourselves ; yet you will not be entitled to claim the blessings of his gracious promise in respect to them.

If, without faith and fidelity in respect to *the one* part of his promise, God is not by his covenant engaged to be *your* God ; so neither, without faith and fidelity in respect to the other part of his promise, is he by his covenant engaged to be the God of *your children*.

It is not, indeed, supposed to be certain, that if you be unbelieving and disobedient, your children will be finally lost ; for God may, as often in his sovereign mercy he does, go out of the limits of the church, and bestow his grace on those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise. But if in this case he does bestow grace upon your children, it will not be in pursuance of any covenant engagement to you. And as he has declared that he *will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children*, if you be unbelieving and unfaithful in respect to your children, will you not have reason for the most fearful apprehensions, lest they should perish in their sins ? Is it not

then important, infinitely important, that you take hold of the promises of God, and with a truly believing and obedient heart, give up, not only yourselves, but your children also, to him, in a covenant not to be forgotten ?

4. From our subject we may infer, that for believing parents to give their children to God, in baptism, is a great and important duty.

When God established his covenant with Abraham, he gave him the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith ; and in the self-same day was Abraham circumcised and Ishmael his son ; and all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him. Anciently circumcision was the appointed seal of the righteousness of faith, the sign or token of God's gracious covenant, and the mark or badge of solemn dedication to him ; and the requirement that the children of the church, as well as their parents, should be circumcised was enforced with the greatest solemnity.

But if the covenant and the church are the same, continued down from the days of Abraham, if God's promise be still to be a God not only to believers, but also to their seed ; then, as the outward seal of the covenant was originally required to be administered to the infant seed of the church ; so, unless it has been expressly prohibited, it is still to be administered to them. But where, my brethren, is the prohibition to be found ? In what part of the word of God is it declared, or intimated, that the appointed seal of the covenant is no longer to be administered to the infant seed of the church ? The seal has indeed been altered. Circumcision has been discontinued, and baptism appointed in its place. But no order, no intimation has been given, that the seal in its

present form is not, as it was expressly required in its ancient form, to be applied to the children of the church.

That baptism has taken the place of circumcision, is exceedingly evident. Circumcision under the former dispensation signified the necessity of a regeneration, or renovation, of the heart by the Holy Spirit ; baptism under the present dispensation signifies the same. Circumcision was formerly a seal of the righteousness of faith ; baptism is now a seal of the same righteousness. Circumcision was formerly a token of God's gracious covenant with his people ; baptism is now a token of the same covenant. Circumcision was formerly a mark or badge of solemn dedication to God ; baptism is now a mark or badge of the same solemn dedication. Circumcision was formerly an appointed prerequisite of admission to the church of God ; baptism is now an appointed prerequisite of admission to the same church. In a word, baptism is of the same import, and of the same use in the church under the present dispensation, as was circumcision under the ancient.

It is true, indeed, that under the ancient dispensation the seal of the covenant was applied only to males ; while under the present dispensation it is applied to both males and females. It is also true, that this is not the only important distinction, which was made between males and females, under the ancient dispensation. But whatever distinctions, were formerly made, we are assured by the apostle that, in respect to the privileges of the covenant, there is to be no longer any distinction ; *for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.*

Nothing, therefore, appears to militate with the sentiment, that baptism has in fact taken place of circumcision ; but the whole analogy of scripture goes to support it. Accordingly the apostle, in the second of Cor

sians, evidently speaks of baptism as being the circumcision of Christ, or Christian circumcision.

But if baptism has been appointed in the place of circumcision, as the seal of the righteousness of faith, a token of God's gracious covenant with his people, and a mark or badge of solemn dedication to the Lord; then, as circumcision was anciently administered to the children of the church; so, as before observed, unless there have been a divine prohibition, baptism is now to be administered to them. As there was under the former dispensation an express precept for administering the seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church; that precept, varying only as the seal is varied, still remains in force, unless it have been expressly repealed. It is arrogance, therefore, to demand, for we have no right to expect, an explicit renewal of this precept to be found in the new testament, any more than of the precept for the observance of the Sabbath.

In the Old Testament there is an explicit precept for the observance of the Sabbath, and also an explicit precept for the application of the seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church; and as the change of the Sabbath, under the present dispensation, from the seventh to the first day of the week, is not to be considered as a repeal of the precept respecting the Sabbath; so neither is the change of the seal of the covenant, from circumcision to baptism, to be considered as a repeal of the precept respecting the application of the seal. The church remains the same, and the covenant the same; the relation of the children of the church is the same, and the seal of the covenant, though varied in form, is still of the same import, and of the same use, and to be applied to the same subjects.*

* Though the antipædobaptists deny that the great promise of the covenant, in its true and spiritual import, had any spe-

It is not incumbent on us to shew, that the precept for administering the appointed seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church *has not* been repealed ; but it is indispensibly incumbent on those who deny infant baptism, to shew in the clearest manner, that it *has* been repealed. For a precept, once in force, and not limited to any certain period, is ever afterwards to be considered as in force, unless known to have been repealed by the same authority by which it was given.

There is not, however, in the whole word of God,

cial respect to Abraham's *natural* seed ; yet they admit, and even insist, that children, the *natural* seed of Abraham, were members of the church or community, of which he was the covenant father !

We are told, moreover, that the church, or community, formed by the covenant with Abraham and his seed, was a *type* of the gospel church. But if, in that church, supposed to be typical, children were admitted to the seal of the covenant, and were recognized as members ; and if, in the gospel church they are neither to be recognized as members, nor admitted to the seal of the covenant ; how does the *antitype* answer to the *type* ? What is gained to the argument of the antipædobaptists, or lost to ours, by supposing the Abrahamic church to have been *merely typical* ?

The very palpable inconsistencies, noticed in this and two former notes, it may not be improper to exhibit together in one point of view.

1. The covenant made with Abraham and his seed, was only a *temporal* covenant, and formed only a *temporal* church ; yet the great promise of the covenant had respect, not to *natural*, but only to *spiritual* seed !

2. Though the great promise of the covenant had respect, not to *natural*, but only to *spiritual* seed ; yet the covenant was long ago abolished. Since the coming of Messiah God is no longer, by covenant, the God of Abraham and his [*spiritual*] seed !

3. Though the great promise of the covenant had no respect to *natural* seed ; yet the natural seed were not only admitted to the seal of the covenant, but even, as members, to all the privileges of the church !

4. Though the Abrahamic church was a type of the Christian church, and in that church children were admitted to the seal of the covenant, and to all the privileges of members ; yet in the gospel church, they are neither to be recognized as members, nor even regarded as fit subjects for the seal of the covenant !

Such are a few of the absurdities of the antipædobaptist scheme.

the least intimation that this precept has ever been repealed ; there is not in the whole word of God the least intimation, that the seal of the covenant is not, under the present dispensation, as it was under the former, to be applied to the children of the church.

Neither the commission, given to the apostles, *Go and teach all nations baptizing them*, nor the exhortation addressed by them to the people, *Repent and be baptized*, comes near to touch the point in question. Neither the one nor the other goes to prove any thing further, than that those, who have not received baptism, must not only believe, but be baptized, in order to a regular standing in the visible church of God. It was precisely thus under the former dispensation. Those who had never been circumcised were required to be circumcised, in order to their regular standing in the church. But whenever parents who had never been circumcised, were admitted to the church, they were not only circumcised themselves, but were afterwards required to offer their children in the same sealing ordinance.

Had the seal of the covenant never been altered, the commission, given to the apostles, would have been, *Go and teach all nations, CIRCUMCISING them* ; and their exhortation to those who had never received circumcision, would have been, *Repent and be CIRCUMCISED ; for the promise is to you and to your children*. But had the case been thus, who would ever have imagined, that there was any thing, either in the commission, or exhortation, like an intimation that children were no longer to receive the seal of the covenant. The real case, however, is substantially the same. Those who have never received baptism are required not only to believe, but also be baptized, in order to their regular standing in the church ; but having been regularly admitted, they are to offer their children also in baptism, as formerly

they were required to offer them in circumcision. For the promise is now the same that it formerly was, to be a God not only to them, but also to their seed after them; and on the ground of this promise, parents are still required, as formerly they were, believingly to give up, not only themselves, but their children also, to the Lord.*

* It is no small infelicity, attending the arguments of the anti-dædobaptists, that they go wide of the point, to which they are professedly directed. When they would prove that the Abrahamic covenant has ceased, the arguments advanced only go to shew that the Mosaic law, or Sinai covenant, is abolished; which we, as well as they, admit and believe. And when they would prove, that the infant seed of the church ought not to be baptized, the arguments adduced only go to shew, that believers, who have never received baptism, ought to be baptized; which we as well as they, admit and believe. But, as when it is shewn that the Mosaic law, or Sinai covenant, is abolished, nothing is done towards proving that the Abrahamic covenant has ceased; so when it is shewn that believers, who have never received baptism, ought to be baptized, nothing is done towards proving that the infant seed of the church ought not to be baptized. Nothing more is done, in either case, towards proving the point in question, than would be done towards proving that female members of the church are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, should it only be shewn that male members are to be admitted. Yet wide as these arguments go of the points to be proved, they are urged and repeated with as much assurance, as if they were pertinent and conclusive; and with weak, unstable, and undiscerning, minds, they have but too often their intended effect.

The celebrated Mr. BAXTER, when employed, in his study, in writing a defence of infant baptism, heard the hawkers cry under his windows, "BAXTER'S ARGUMENTS FOR BELIEVERS' BAPTISM. The fact was, in some of his publications, speaking of the terms of the baptismal covenant, Mr Baxter had shewn the necessity of a justifying faith in order to baptism. From these publications, though Mr. Baxter had been careful to declare that he spoke in reference to adults only, collections were made, and published in a pamphlet, as arguments against infant baptism. Upon this Mr. Baxter observes, "The men that cite authors at this rate, cite me against myself with the like confidence." *Baxter's More Proofs for Infant Baptism.*

In a manner similar to this some of the primitive fathers, as particularly Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and even Austin, who, in his dispute with Pelagius, had expressly alledged infant baptism in proof of the doctrine of original sin, have been quoted by the anti-dædobaptists, as if favoring their cause.

Suffer little children, says Christ, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. Repent, says Peter to the thousands who had never been baptized, Repent and be baptized—for the promise is to you and to your children. For the unbelieving husband, says Paul, is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. These plain intimations are in perfect agreement with the language of ancient prophecy, concerning the church in gospel days. *Their children also shall be as aforesaid, and their congregation, or church; shall be established. Aforesaid* the children of the church were solemnly dedicated to God, and sealed with the seal of his everlasting covenant. Accordingly we have examples on record in the new testament of believing parents dedicating their children, and obtaining for them the baptismal seal. Not only did Christ receive little children into his arms, and bless them; but his apostles baptized whole households. Lydia was not only baptized herself; but afterwards had her whole household also baptized. The believing Jailor was baptized himself, *and all his straightway.* The household of Stephanus was also baptized.

As we have sufficient evidence that it was the practice of the apostles, pursuant to the tenor of God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed, to baptize the households of believing parents; so we have the testimony of the earliest of the Christian fathers, that this was the universal practice of the church, in the ages immediately succeeding the apostles.

And in a manner equally unfair and preposterous, are Christ and his apostles often quoted.

In a word, the arguments most in use among the antipædo-baptists, and of the greatest efficacy, as a sort of popular charm, do not touch the points of real difference between us and them.

For more than three thousand years the seal of the covenant was universally applied to the children of the church, no one forbidding it. It was thus during the space of about four hundred years, which intervened between the first establishment of the church, in the family of Abraham, and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. It was thus for the space of about fifteen hundred years, during which the Mosaic dispensation was continued. And it was thus for the space of about eleven hundred years, after the introduction of the Christian dispensation. And if, during the last three hundred years, there have been some in the different parts of Christendom, who have forbidden little children to be brought to Christ, and denied the application of the seal of the covenant to them ; yet, thanks be to God, in respect to this interesting matter, the great body of the church has still adhered to the divine institute, and to the uniform practice of the faithful in all former ages.*

* As there was no dispute about baptism in the first ages of Christianity, it should not be expected that much would be found, particularly on the subject, in the writings of those ages. But because there is nothing *directly* on the subject, either for or against infant baptism, in the fragments which have come down to us, of the writings of the first century, the antipædobaptists, with an assurance peculiar to themselves, have undertaken to *assert*, not to *prove*, that during the first century, infant baptism *was not* practised in the church. With equal propriety we might assert, even had we no proof to support our assertion, that it *was* practised universally. But we are not reduced to this extremity. The sacred truth is, there is as much evidence, as, from the state of the case, could reasonably be expected, that during the first century, and for several succeeding ages, infant baptism was practised in the church, universally, and without contradiction or question.

In the writings of CLEMENS ROMANUS and HERMES PASTOR, both cotemporaries with the apostles, and both mentioned by Paul, the former in his epistle to the Phillipians, and the latter in his epistle to the Romans, passages are extant, which by fair implication prove the practice of infant baptism in their day.—JUSTIN MARTYR and IRENÆUS, the former of whom was born within three or four years after the death of the apostle JOHN, and the latter of whom was the disciple of POLYCARP, the bishop or angel of the church of Smyrna, to whom John, in the Revelation, addressed his epistle, are more particular and clear, to the same purpose. TERTULLIAN, who was about eleven

It is not to be expected that the limits of an inference, in a discourse like this, will admit of an exhibition of all the various and abundant proof, which might be exhibited, and which has from time to time by different

years old when Polycarp died, and was many years cotemporary with Irenæus; and ORIGEN, who was cotemporary with Tertullian, are direct and explicit on the subject. Speaking of the moral pollution of infants, Origen says, "What is the reason, that, whereas the baptism of the church is given for forgiveness; INFANTS also, by the usage of the church, are baptized; when if there were nothing in infants, which wanted forgiveness or mercy, baptism would be needless to them." CYPRIAN, bishop of Carthage, who suffered martyrdom for the Christian faith, only about five years after the death of Origen, was president of a council, which consisted of sixty six bishops, or pastors of churches, and which delivered an unanimous opinion, "that the baptism of infants was not to be deferred," as some supposed it should be, "to the eighth day, but might be given to them any time before." GREGORY NAZIANZEN, BASIL, AMBROSE, CHRYSOSTOM, and JEROME, all of whom flourished within about a hundred years of Origen and Cyprian, are all explicit on the subject; explain the design of infant baptism, mention it as coming in the place of circumcision, and speak of it as the universal and undisputed practice of the church.

AUSTIN, who was cotemporary with some of these last, and who flourished only about two hundred and eighty years after the apostles, in a controversy with PELAGIUS, alledged the practice of infant baptism, in proof of the doctrine of original sin. "Why are infants," says he, "baptized for the remission of sin, if they have none? Infant baptism *the whole church practices*; it was not instituted by councils, but was *EVER IN USE.*" Pelagius, whose interest it was to set this argument aside, was so far from denying the alledged fact, that, in reply to the suggestion of some that by denying original sin, he denied the right of infants to baptism, he utterly discards the idea, and affirms, "that he never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants." This testimony is impregnable. Pelagius was a man of great reading, and had travelled extensively. He was born in Britain, resided some time at Rome, and made the tour of the Christianized parts of Africa and Asia, by the way of Egypt and Jerusalem. Yet in the whole of his reading and of his travels, he never read or heard of any, who denied the divine institution of infant baptism!

From this period, the matter is clear, beyond dispute. Dr. GILL himself, one of the most learned of the antipædobaptist writers, acknowledges that "infant baptism was the practice of the church, universally, from the third to the eleventh century."

"FOR THE FIRST FOUR HUNDRED YEARS," says Dr. WALL, in his History of infant Baptism, "there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised the delay of infant baptism, in some cases; and one Gregory, who did perhaps practise such delay, in the case of his own children; but no society, so thinking or so

writers been exhibited, in support of infant baptism. But the summary proof which has now been offered, may suffice for our present purpose.

If the Abrahamic covenant be still the covenant of the church, and if the view which we have taken of the covenant be substantially correct ; it will be admitted, on

practising, nor one man so saying, that it was unlawful to baptize infants. In the next SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS, there is not so much as one man to be found, that either spoke or practised such delay, but all the contrary. And when about the year ELEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY, *one sect* among the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being *incapable of salvation*; the *main body* of that people rejected their opinion. *And the sect that still held to it, quickly dwindled away and disappeared. And there was nothing more heard of holding that tenet, TILL THE YEAR FIFTEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY TWO.*" In confirmation of this statement it may be proper to observe, that Mr. WHISTON, a man eminent in literature, who for certain reasons left the communion of the established church of England, and went over to the antipædobaptists, frankly declares, that Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism, as to the facts, appeared to him most accurately done, and might be depended upon by the Baptists themselves."

The unprejudiced reader will now judge, with how much candor and truth, an attempt has been made in some late publications, to make the *unlearned and unstable* believe, that the practice of infant baptism had its rise in the dark ages, under the influence of popery. To give countenance to this attempt, some passages have been quoted from WALAFRID STRABO, in which he has represented the doctrine of original sin, and the doctrine of infant baptism, as having had their origin about the time of St. Austin. But the representations of Strabo, a man of but little reading, but of great affectation to say something new, who wrote, about the middle of the eighth century, in the very midst of the Gothic darkness, as they go directly in the face of the primitive fathers of the church, are surely entitled to very little regard.

As to the assertion in "A Miniature History of the Baptists," that "the Waldenses, Wickliffites, and Hussites were baptists," it may suffice to say, there is sufficient evidence that it has no foundation in truth. The sentiments holden by them with respect to the church, as stated by Dr. Mosheim, are also holden by many of the *pædobaptist* churches of the present day. And the same reasoning, if reasoning it must be called, by which it was supposed to be proved, that the Waldenses, Wickliffites, Hussites, and other witnesses for the truth in the dark ages, were antipædobaptists, would equally prove that the Tabernacle Church are antipædobaptists. This the writer of "A Miniature History" has himself been brought to acknowledge.

all hands, that the seal of the covenant is still to be administered, as formerly it was, to the infant seed of the church. Those who deny infant baptism are reduced to a denial also of the Abrahamic covenant and church; that covenant which was established for an everlasting covenant, and which, though *the mountains depart and the hills be removed*, Jehovah has declared *shall never be removed*; and that church which is to be called *the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel*, and which Jehovah has declared *he will make an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations!* But this covenant, my brethren, *you* cannot reject: this church *you* cannot renounce. And adhering religiously, to the everlasting covenant and church of God, you cannot *forbid water* that your children should not receive the appointed seal.

Nor is it to be thought that this is a light matter. Let it not be lightly, let it not, as too often it has been, even contemptuously be asked, What good can it do infants to be baptized? Such a question, surely, comes with no very good grace from persons, who place even, perhaps, an undue stress upon the baptism of adults. With equal pertinency it might be asked, What good could it do the infants of the church, anciently, to be circumcised. With equal pertinency it might be asked, What good can it do infants believingly to give them up to God, to pray for them, or, as they grow in understanding, religiously to instruct them? Nay, with equal pertinency it might be asked, What benefit can it be to believing parents themselves to be baptized, if they never before have been?

The outward rite, we know, will never of itself, save any one, whether infant or adult. But if God has been pleased graciously to promise, to be a God unto us and to our seed after us; and on the ground of this promise, has required that we give not only ourselves, but

our children also to him, in an everlasting covenant ; and that the appointed seal of the covenant be not only upon us, but also upon them ; then the duty is as plain as it is important. Whenever we undertake to question the propriety or utility of God's requirements, we throw ourselves at once into the snare of the devil ; and we shall be entirely indebted to sovereign grace, if we ever get rid of the entanglement.

To give up our children to God, on the ground of his gracious promise, believingly to offer them for the baptismal seal of the covenant, to pray for them, to command them after us in the way of righteousness and truth, and to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are great and important covenant duties, and have so intimate and so solemn a connexion with each other, that none of them can be denied, or neglected, without great fault, and great hazard.

5. It may be inferred from our subject, that sprinkling, or affusion, is a valid and scriptural mode of baptism.

It has been, as we trust, clearly shewn, that the covenant, made with Abraham and his seed, and the church formed by it, were intended to continue, from generation to generation, down to the latest periods of time. For this purpose provision was made in the covenant itself ; and Jehovah, whose covenant it is, who made the provision for its perpetuity, and engaged to carry that provision into effect, has certainly never failed, in respect to his design. He has continued his covenant and his church, according to his purpose and promise.

But if there have been, in every period, a true church in the world ; then there have been, in every period, essentially, correct views of the sacraments and seals of the

church. In particular, since the alteration of the first seal, there must have been essentially correct views of baptism. For it were no less absurd in itself, than incompatible with the purposes and promises of God, to suppose that, at any period a true church has existed, without essentially correct views of the first sacrament and seal.

It is, however, a well supported fact, that in the first ages of Christianity, and for about twelve or fifteen hundred years, baptism, by sprinkling, or affusion, was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid. Even those, who in ordinary cases, baptized by immersion, did not deny, but admitted, the validity of baptism by sprinkling or affusion. Hence, if baptism, by sprinkling or affusion, be not valid and scriptural; then for the first twelve or fifteen hundred years, the views of the whole body of the Christian world respecting baptism, the first sacrament or seal of the church, were essentially erroneous.

It is also a well known fact, that for several generations at least, baptism, by sprinkling or affusion, was not only acknowledged to be scriptural and valid; but was almost universally practised, by those parts of the professedly Christian world, which, by protestants, are believed to have constituted, in those periods, the true church of Christ.

Where was the church of Christ, my brethren, in the days of the reformation, under Luther and Calvin, Melancthon and Zuinglius, and their co-workers and successors, if the churches, formed under them were not true and regularly constituted churches? But Luther and Calvin, Melancthon and Zuinglius, and their co-workers and successors, administered baptism in the mode of sprinkling or affusion. Where has been the church of Christ, for these two or three hundred years past, if no

part of it have been to be found among the Lutherans of Germany, Denmark or Sweden ; nor among the Presbyterian Calvinists of Switzerland, Holland, or Scotland ; nor among the persecuted Hugonots of France ; nor among any of the communions, either Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational, of England or America ? But in all these reformed communions, baptism, by sprinkling or affusion, has been universally admitted as valid, and almost universally practised.

Is this mode of baptism, then, utterly invalid and unscriptural ? Are all these communions, embracing the great body of the Protestant Christian world, to be entirely set aside, as constituting no part of the true church of Christ ? Is it among the Anabaptists* only ; is it among those who utterly renounce the Abrahamic cove-

* Anabaptist. This is not intended as a term of reproach. It is the name by which the sect, sometimes called baptists, was originally denominated, and is used in the connexion in which it stands, as the most proper term of distinction. The term, *baptist*, does not properly distinguish the sect in question from others. We are all baptists ; that is, we all hold to baptism. The term, *anabaptist*, properly distinguishes those who *rebaptize*, or baptize again, such as go over to them from other communions ; as the term, *antipædobaptist*, properly distinguishes those who oppose the baptism of children.

It would be unnecessary to be thus particular about names, were it not that a disposition has lately been manifested on the part of the anabaptists, or antipædobaptists, to turn the name, *baptist*, which they have assumed, to their advantage. The author of Letters to Rev. Mr. Anderson has not only gratuitously coined, and contemptuously bestowed upon us, a new name ; but because he finds that John, the harbinger of Christ, is called *the Baptist*, very shrewdly concludes that those who were baptized by John, were also baptists, &c. But upon being asked by the author of these Discourses, whether the term baptist, was applied to John in the same sense in which it is now applied to those who are called baptists, he confessed the truth, and said it was not.

The term baptist, as applied to John, signified a baptizer, or one commissioned to baptize. And that an attempt should be made, such as appears in Letters to Rev. Mr. Anderson, to impose upon the unlearned, by the mere form and sound of the word, must be matter of equal astonishment and regret to every candid friend of truth.

nant and church, that, nevertheless, the true church of God is only to be found ?

The anabaptists, or antipædobaptists, my brethren, are a sect of modern date. They had their origin sometime after the reformation under Luther and Calvin ; and their origin, certainly, though we would by no means reproach our more regular brethren of the present day with it, was but very little calculated to impress a belief that the true church of God was only to be found among them.

If at any earlier period, there were any who denied infant baptism, they were an irregular sect of the Waldenses, small, of short continuance, and by the great body of the good Waldenses, constantly opposed. It is not, however, certain, that even the Petrobrusians, the sect here alluded to, were anabaptists. And if they were not, ecclesiastical history gives us no information of any antipædobaptist societies or churches, until they appeared in Germany, at the period just mentioned.

From that period to the present, though they have considerably increased, and, some of them, in many respects, improved ; yet they have ever been but a very small proportion of the Christian world. I do not mean that they have been but a small proportion of the *nomi- nally* Christian world ; but a very small proportion of the *true and faithful* professing people of God. Allowing them all which candor and charity can require, and we would certainly be candid and charitable, they have always been, and still continue to be, vastly outnumbered by other professors and churches, among whom there has been, at least, as much Christian knowledge, and as much of the spirit of the gospel, as among them.

Can we, then, believe that their mode of baptism only

is scriptural and valid? If so, what becomes of the faithfulness of God to his promises? If for many centuries, the whole Christian world were in an error, which, in effect, destroyed the validity and the very being of the first sacrament or seal of the church; if for several ages God's true and faithful people were almost universally in an unbaptized and unchurched state; and if now only that small proportion of his professing people, *who deny the Abrahamic covenant and church*, are to be accounted the true church of Christ; what then becomes of the design for which the Abrahamic church was formed, and of the covenant provision which was made for its continuance throughout all generations.

Can it, my brethren, be believed, that so vastly the greater part of God's most faithful and praying people, of his purest and most enlightened churches, and of his most approved and successful ministers have been, for so many hundreds of years, in such a state of gross error and wickedness, as that their baptism, their covenant vows, their church state, their ordination solemnities, their sacred celebrations of the holy supper, and their whole ecclesiastical order and administration, have been not a mere nullity only, but a solemn mockery of God, an offensive smoke in his nose! Can it be believed that an utter renouncement, a public and solemn abjuration, of this baptism, these covenant vows, this church state, these ordination solemnities, these sacred celebrations of the holy supper; and all this church order and administration, ought to be proclaimed with joy and exultation, as a conversion from darkness unto light? And that he, who does the most to disturb and diminish, to disperse and overthrow these churches and ministers, does God the greatest service? No, my brethren; no candid Christian, no judicious person, can believe it. It is utterly incompatible with the great design for which the church was instituted; it is repugnant to all the re-

presentations of scripture respecting the church ; it is directly in the face of the covenant promises of Jehovah. And the man, who could believe it, would find but little difficulty in believing, that the Bible is a cunningly devised fable ; that the Christian church, with all its institutions, is a gross imposition upon the world ; and that the religion of Jesus is of no higher origin, than that of Mohammed, or of Brama !

The fair and invincible conclusion then is, that sprinkling or affusion, the mode of baptism practised in these churches, is scriptural and valid. Accordingly there is nothing in the scriptures against it, but much, as might be shewn, did time permit, in favor of it.

We have no evidence in the scriptures, that, in the days of Christ and his apostles, any person was baptized, by dipping, or immersing.

After all the laborious and ostentatious criticism, upon the Greek word *baptizo*, it still remains a fact, well known to all who are versed in the Greek language, that the use of that word determines nothing, in respect to the particular mode, in which water is to be applied in baptism. It is in a variety of instances in the Greek scriptures, and in other Greek writings, used to signify a washing or cleansing, which was performed by sprinkling or pouring ; and may as properly signify sprinkling or pouring, as plunging or dipping.*

*It has been a common thing with the antipædobaptists, to speak very disrespectfully of learning and learned men. But of late, one can hardly meet with an antipædobaptist, who is not prepared to talk so fluently, and so learnedly, of the meaning of *Greek* and *Latin* words, as almost to amaze one. Even the author of *Seven Sermons, on the Mode and Subjects of Baptism*, "desires to thank God that he knows the *Greek* as well as any man ;" and has two or three Sermons almost wholly upon the meaning of a few *Greek* and *Latin* words. On this subject, however, though from his manner one might be led to suppose it had never before been attended to, he has nothing, material, new :

In two or three instances we read indeed, of their going down *into* the water and coming up *out of* the water. But the original particles rendered in these instances, *into*, and *out of*, are as properly, and much more commonly, rendered simply *to* and *from*. And it is partic-

Nothing but what was furnished to his hands by Dr. Gill, and other anabaptist writers; and nothing but what has been repeatedly and unanswerably answered. He *asserts* much; but *proves* very little. And yet with an authoritative air, but little becoming a Christian minister, he requires us all to submit to his assertions, on pain of being placed at the *ban* of the kingdom of Christ.

The word *baptizo*, as conceded on all hands, signifies *to wash*. If it be said, that sprinkling or affusion is not washing; it may, also, with equal pertinency, be said, that dipping is not washing. If, in reply, it be said, that dipping is one mode in which washing is performed; it may, in rejoinder, be said, so also is sprinkling or affusion, one mode in which washing is performed; and that, too, the mode in which the scriptures most commonly represent *ceremonial* and *spiritual* washings. It was by *sprinkling clean water upon them*, and not by dipping them in water, that God's people were to be so effectually washed, as *from all their filthiness, and from all their idols, to be cleansed*. It is by the *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*, and not by being dipped in it, that believers are so effectually washed, as to be admitted to the holy presence and kingdom of the living God.

It is important to be remembered, that when words are used in reference to divine institutions, and to spiritual things, they have an appropriate meaning, which can never be determined from the meaning which they have in their common use.

The Greek word *deipnon*, rendered *supper*, in common use, signified a feast, or a common meal; yet, in the sacrament of the supper, we suppose it to be sufficient to eat a very small piece of bread, and to drink but very little of a cup of wine. But from the ordinary meaning of the word *deipnon*, it might be as properly, and as strongly argued, that those who have only eaten a small piece of bread, and tasted of a little wine, have not supped, agreeably to the institution of the Lord's supper; as from the ordinary meaning of the word *baptizo*, [*wash, not immerse*] it can be argued, that those who have only been sprinkled have not been *washed*, or baptized, agreeably to the institution of baptism. And should any zealous Christians think it necessary to make literally a feast, or a full meal, at the Lord's table; they might with as much propriety, and as much of the Christian spirit, separate themselves from the communion of those who only partake of a little bread and wine, and charge them with refusing to keep the ordinance of the Lord; as those, who think it necessary to be plunged all over in water, can separate themselves from the communion of those, who have only been baptized by sprinkling, and charge them with not keeping the ordinance of the Lord.

larly to be remembered, that, when they went down to the water, or *into* the water, it is not, in a single instance, said how they were there baptized, whether by dipping, or by sprinkling. Will any person, then, of intelligence and candor, alledge the passages, now in view, as containing the least real evidence in favor of immersion?

Upon a candid and attentive consideration of the several accounts of baptisms, recorded in the scriptures, I think it will appear, that those baptisms were performed in the most easy and convenient mode.

To accommodate the people, who flocked by hundreds and by thousands to his baptism, which, however, was not the Christian baptism,* John chose, for the scene

*That John's baptism was not Christian baptism, is evident from many considerations, a few of which only, can be briefly suggested.

1. John did not baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *Acts* xix. 2; 3, 4.

2. Persons who had received John's baptism were afterwards baptized with the Christian baptism. *Ibid.* verse 5.

3. John was not a Christian apostle, but a minister under the Mosaic law. He was sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, and preached that *the kingdom of heaven*, or Christian dispensation, was at hand, not that it was already come.

4. If John's baptism were Christian baptism, then the great body of the Jewish nation were Christians; for *there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in, or at, Jordan.*

But if John's baptism were not Christian baptism, then the baptism of Christ by John, in whatever mode administered, was no example for Christians.

Christ's baptism was designed regularly to introduce him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses; under which he commenced his ministry, and which it behoved him to fulfil.

Does not the idea, then, of following Christ into the water, which has, unhappily, so powerful an effect upon many minds, partake very much of the nature of delusion and superstition?—There is no evidence that Christ was buried in water; and even if he were, his baptism was of an import very different from that of the baptism which he afterwards instituted for his followers. Are we to go into the water, under the idea of following Christ—into his priestly office!—Ought we to call this delusion and superstition; or ought we to call it the height of impiety? We should be extremely sorry to wound a single tender mind? but we consider it of high importance, that tender minds should be

of his ministry, a situation at Enon, and another by the river Jordan, where the multitudes and their beasts might find water for their refreshment; and, when assembled upon the banks of the Jordan, the most convenient way would be for them to go down to the brink of the water, and there be baptized by affusion or sprinkling. But on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were baptized in a very short time, they were at the temple, in the midst of Jerusalem: where the most convenient, if not the only, way would be to have water brought in a bason, or some other vessel, and baptize them in the same mode. As Philip and the Eunuch were travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, where, as travellers assure us, there was no river, or body of water, sufficient for the purpose of immersion; the way most convenient for them was to alight from the chariot, and step down to the small rivulet which presented, and there solemnize the ordinance. But as Paul was at the house of Judas in Damascus, and as Cornelius and the Jailor were at home; the most convenient way for them, and indeed, the only way for Paul and the Jailor, was to have water brought, and to be baptized in their respective houses.

In no single instance, is there the least intimation of leaving the place of worship, wherever it might be, and going away to a river, or a pond, for the purpose of baptism; and, therefore, for such a practice there is no scripture warrant.

The two passages of the apostle, in which the term *buried*, is used in connexion with the term, *baptism*, determine nothing, as I have heretofore shewn at large,* and

guarded against mistaking the glare of error for the light of truth, and the delusive impulses of their passions, for the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

For a more complete view of the ministry of John, see Mass. Miss. Magazine. Vol. iv. Nos. 4 & 5.

* See Mass. Miss. Magazine.—V

as has often been shewn, in respect to the mode of baptism. They offer no more reason why, at the time of our baptism, we should be *buried*, than why we should be *planted*, and *circumcised*, and *crucified*. They describe the effects of the baptism of the Holy Spirit ; but have no respect to the mode of the external ordinance.

As baptism is not designed to commemorate the death of Christ, which is the special design of the holy supper ; but to represent the application of his blood for our justification, or the renovation of the heart, by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit ; is it not plain, that sprinkling is a mode, much more properly significant, than dipping ? In reference to the application of the blood of Christ, we never read of dipping, or immersing ; but constantly of sprinkling or pouring. *Ye are come to the blood of SPRINKLING. And SPRINKLING of the blood of Christ. I will POUR OUT my Spirit upon all flesh. I will SPRINKLE clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. So shall he (Christ) SPRINKLE, not dip, many nations.* Such are the uniform representations of scripture.

And, my brethren, is it not more congenial with the simplicity of the gospel, is it not more compatible with every idea of propriety and decency, is it not more conducive to religious order and solemnity, to perform the sacred rite of baptism in the house of God, where he has appointed in a more special manner to meet his church, and where the most solemn rites of his worship are performed ; than to leave these hallowed courts, and this impressive scene of silent solemnity and devotion, and with great inconvenience, great parade, and, perhaps, great tumult, go abroad for the administration of the ordinance, to a river or a pond.*

* So far as the dispute between us and the anabaptists, with respect to the mode of baptism, is of importance, it is important

6. It appears from our subject, that there is a great and important duty devolving on the church, in respect to their baptised children.

Though baptized persons, previously to their taking, personally, the vows of the covenant upon them, are neither entitled to the privileges, nor subject to the discipline, of the church, as members in complete standing; yet, as *the children of the covenant*, their relation to the church is sacred, and the correspondent duty is great.

The parents, as individuals, have solemnly given them up to God; and engaged to bring them up for him in holy nurture and admonition. This is a most solemn engagement, and should certainly be felt as such by every parent in covenant. By their covenant vows parents are sacredly bound, believingly to trust in the promise of God respecting their children; daily to bear them on their hearts at the throne of grace, praying with them and

that the point in dispute should be distinctly holden in view. The question properly between us is not this, whether any were baptized in the days of Christ and his apostles by immersion or dipping; but it is precisely this, whether immersion or dipping be the only valid mode of baptism. Could it even be proved, as however it cannot be, that some were baptized in the apostles' days by immersion; it would avail nothing against our practice, unless it could be proved, that none were baptized in any other way. For if any were baptized in any other way, then immersion is not the only valid mode of baptism. Nay, if it were even in the most extreme cases only, such as those of sickness and imprisonment, that baptism was administered in the way of sprinkling or affusion, the argument would remain the same: for if in any case whatever, baptism might be administered by sprinkling or affusion; then immersion is not essential to the ordinance.

But if immersion be not essential to the ordinance of baptism, as we have abundant evidence that it is not; is it not a solemn affair, that the anabaptists take it upon themselves to declare our baptism to be no baptism, and our churches to be no churches, thus unbaptizing and unchurching the great body of the Christian world; that they utterly separate themselves from our communion, thus making an unwarrantable schism in the body of Christ; and that they place such a stress upon baptism in their mode, as to make it the subject on which to display their greatest zeal, thus making people believe, in too many instances, that going

for them ; faithfully to instruct them, as they become capable of receiving instruction, in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel ; vigilantly to restrain them from vice and guard them from error ; perseveringly to use with

into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort, and of their eternal salvation.

We are told, indeed, that there is *one baptism* ; and this we believe. *For by ONE SPIRIT are we all baptized into ONE BODY, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free.* Will the anabaptists undertake seriously to say, that in asserting *one baptism*, the apostle had reference to the mode, in which water is to be applied in the external ordinance ? Holding their mode to be *essential* to the ordinance is it not incumbent on them to prove, *from the plain word of God*, that the apostles baptized only by immersion, and that they immersed exactly in the present anabaptist manner ? This they never can prove.

“The ancient Christians,” says Dr. Wall, “when they were baptized by immersion, *were all baptized naked* ; whether they were men, women or children. Vossius has collected several proofs of this ; which I shall omit, because it is a clear case.” It is, moreover, a clear case, that when they were baptized by immersion, *they were immersed three times* ; once in the name of each of the divine Persons of the holy Trinity. At their baptism, also, *they were signed with the cross* ; and on coming out of the water, *were clad in white robes, and fed with a mixture of honey and milk.* Let it not be said, that this was the manner of popish immersions : It was the manner of the earliest immersions of which we have an account. And that it was the common if not the uniform, manner of the early immersions is as certain, as that any were baptized by immersion in early times.

How then can the anabaptists be sure, that *their* manner of baptizing by immersion is scriptural and valid ? Why do they not baptize in the manner of those who baptized by immersion in former times ? Is it for the sake of *decency* and *convenience*, that they have so far departed from the manner of the first immersions ? Are they not aware, that if the mode be so essential to the ordinance as they contend, either *their* immersions are not valid, or the *first* immersions were not ? Will they say, that the ancient immersions were not valid, because those who baptized in that way, still allowed sprinkling, or affusion, to be a valid mode of baptism ?

The anabaptists, say some, have as much scripture for *their* mode as we have for *ours*. This is nothing to the purpose. Have they scripture to prove that *their* mode, and *their* mode only, is valid ? This is the single question.

But is it not a cross to go into the water ? A serious question. But in reply, with the most perfect candor we ask, Was it a cross to the Judaizing Christians to be circumcised ? Is it a cross, in the Christian sense, to do any thing, which will help *to make a fair shew in the flesh* ? Gal. vi. 12.

them their parental influence and authority, as occasion may require, that they may reverence the institutions of religion, and regularly attend, at the most proper places, the public worship of God, and such other means of religious instruction as may with propriety and convenience be attended; and, in a word, *so to command their children, and their households, after them, that they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; and that God may bring upon them all the blessings of his covenant.*

The church, also, as a body, are bound under solemn engagements, respecting all the children of the church. They have solemnly covenanted with God, and with each other, to exercise mutual watchfulness, and to reciprocate every faithful and brotherly office. They are engaged, particularly, to watch over each other in respect to the duty, which they severally owe to their children; and in an affectionate and Christian manner to offer such advice, admonition, and reproof, as occasion may require, and wisdom direct; and on the ground of God's gracious promise to the church, earnestly to pray without ceasing, that the Spirit of the Lord may be poured out upon them, *and his blessing upon their offspring.*

How interesting, my brethren, how vastly important is all this duty. Did professors and churches, generally, but feel it as they ought, and were they but faithful, how different from what it now is would be the aspect and the real state of the Christian world? How soon would *the hearts of the fathers be turned unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers; and the Lord make ready a people, a numerous people, prepared for his praise?* How soon would the church at large appear like a *watered garden*; and the children of the church *spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses?* How soon would it cease to be a question whether there be any propriety or profit in the baptism

of children? How soon would all the objections, and cavils, and reproaches, respecting infant baptism, be effectually refuted and silenced; and all the truly conscientious and pious of our brethren, who oppose the institution, be constrained to acknowledge, and renounce their error, and come over to the true ground of God's gracious and everlasting covenant; and there be, in this respect, *but one fold, as there is but one Shepherd!* But alas! my brethren, how little in general do professors and churches feel, and how little do they practise, of the great and interesting duty, which they owe to the children of the covenant? And what vast advantage does their neglect in this particular, afford to their adversaries to be turned against them!

7. Our subject leads us to admiring views of the infinite grace and wisdom, which God has manifested, in the covenant established with his church.

Infinite grace was manifested in God's promise to Abraham to be a God to him; and the same infinite grace is manifested in the same promise to every true believer. Abraham and all who are blessed with him, might justly have been left as children of wrath, utterly to perish in a state of alienation from God: And that they were not thus left is to be wholly ascribed to free and sovereign grace. Infinite grace and *wisdom* were manifested in establishing a visible church in the world, with such provision as to insure its perpetuity throughout all generations. Had no such establishment been instituted, what, my brethren, must have been the moral state of the world? Where would have appeared the light of religion? How would have been upholden the worship of God? In what way would the lively oracles have been received, authenticated, preserved, and transmitted, down the lapse of successive generations? How would the way have

been prepared for the coming of Messiah, and for the accomplishment of the great purposes of his coming? And how would *the blessing of Abraham, through faith in Messiah, have come on the Gentiles?* A moment's attention to these, and other similar enquiries, cannot fail to raise in your minds a grateful and devout admiration of God's infinite grace and wisdom, manifested in the establishment of a visible and perpetual church in the world.

Infinite grace and wisdom are manifest, in connecting children with their parents in the covenant of the church. It is not on account of any thing meritorious in the faith and fidelity of the parent, that God engages to be a God to his children; but it is owing entirely to his holy and sovereign pleasure, that his covenant is thus graciously ordered. And though he has been pleased to connect children with their parents, in his gracious covenant; yet as it is only on account of the righteousness of Christ, and through faith in him, that he has mercy on the *parent*, and is a God to him; so it is only on account of the righteousness of Christ, and through faith in him, that he will have mercy on the *children*, and be a God unto them. But in the accomplishment of his wise and gracious purposes, God is pleased to employ human means; and what more proper means could he employ, in respect to the salvation of children, than the faith and prayers, the counsels and instructions, the cautions and admonitions, of their pious parents? Who should care so much for children as their parents? Who can be under so good advantages for access to their opening minds and to their hearts, as their parents? Who should be so likely daily to pray with them and for them, patiently and perseveringly to counsel and instruct them, and with unceasing and tender solicitude, to watch for their good, as their parents? How high, then, and how grateful, my brethren, should be our admiration of the grace and the wis-

dom of God, in so ordering his covenant, as to give the greatest encouragement to parental faithfulness; and thus to engage all the tenderest energies of the parental heart in aid of religious duty? How vast are our obligations arising from this part of his gracious covenant; and what monsters of unbelief and ingratitude must we be, if we either deny, refuse, or neglect the grace, so kindly offered to us for our children?

Infinite grace and wisdom are manifested, in fine, in making the church the grand repository of blessings for all the families of the earth. The great and precious promise, which was made to Abraham, and which, in succeeding ages, was so often repeated, and so clearly unfolded, that in him and his seed, all the kindreds of the world should be blessed; is eminently calculated to support and enliven the hopes of the church, in the darkest times; to lead her to take a deep and lively interest in all the concerns of the world; to give enlargement to her desires, and fervency to her prayers, for the effusions of the Spirit of grace: and to impart spirit to her exertions, and efficacy to her measures for the spread of the gospel, and the extension of Messiah's kingdom.

Indeed, my brethren, the more we contemplate God's everlasting covenant with his church, the more shall we see in it to admire of matchless wisdom and grace. It was in a particular view of this covenant, that the apostle, in grateful admiration, exclaimed; *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!*

8. From all which has been offered on this subject, it appears to be a great duty, sacredly incumbent on those who are set for the defence of the gospel, and upon all,

firmly to maintain the ground and principles of God's gracious and everlasting covenant.

God forbid, my brethren, that in respect to any denomination or sect of professing Christians, we should ever display any thing like a spirit of persecution, or even of uncharitableness. No; in so far as they discover an adherence to the truth, a regard for true religion, and a zeal for God according to knowledge, we will approve and love them; but wherein they depart from the truth, do wrong to the cause of religion, and display the unhallowed spirit of party, we will bear, as we are enabled and have occasion, our testimony against them. At least, we will use all proper and Christian means, to guard ourselves and others against embracing the same error, committing the same wrong, or displaying the same spirit.— This is not persecution; it is only the part of Christian fidelity and kindness.

Any cause or doctrine which shrinks from the light of fair investigation, or will not endure the test of fair scripture argument, certainly cannot be the cause of truth, nor a doctrine according to godliness. And those who will be offended or hurt by a fair and candid exhibition of argument, and vindication of sentiments in opposition to their own, give the greatest evidence that they are not contending, or concerned, for the cause of truth, but only for the cause of party.

Merely a denial of the external rite of baptism to the infant seed of believers, though in itself exceedingly reprehensible, as it is a denial of an important divine institution, is, however, but a small part of the error of our antipædobaptist brethren. They deny God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace, the grand charter of the inheritance and privileges of his people, and the

source of blessings to all the kindreds of the earth. They deny the church of God which was formed in the family of Abraham, and which, under different dispensations, amidst the various commotions and changes of the world, has been gradually rising, and is destined still to rise, in beauty and in glory, until it become *the perfection of beauty*, and the *joy* of the universe. The grand provision, which, in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make for the preservation of a righteous seed on the earth, and for the maintenance and promotion, from age to age, of his cause and kingdom in this hostile world, they not only deny, but openly condemn. They deny and condemn the grace, which is so kindly and so condescendingly offered for the spiritual renovation, and everlasting salvation, of the seed of the church. The great body of God's visible professing people, even the most enlightened and the most faithful, for hundreds of years, they utterly set aside, as constituting no part of the true church of Christ, but only a part of antichrist. All the covenant vows, all the baptisms both of infants and adults, all the celebrations of the holy supper, all the ordination solemnities, all the order and administration of the great body of the churches, for hundreds of years, they, in effect, set at nought, and represent as no better than a solemn mockery of God.* The strong bond of connexion between the old and new testament scriptures, they, in a manner, destroy. The beautiful plan of divine wisdom and grace, exhibited in the covenant, they exceedingly mar; and the mystical body of Christ, declared in his word to be *one*, they rend in twain!

* At Sedgwick, in April last, baptisms were administered, a church was formed, and a minister was ordained, as if before there had been no baptisms administered, no church established, and no minister ordained in the place! Thus, in the face of the world, was the whole great body of our churches and ministers, with all our sacred institutions and solemnities, *deliberately* set at nought! This has been widely, and with great exultation, proclaimed abroad by the antipædobaptists.

Is there not in all this, my brethren, very great error, and very great wrong? Is there not in all this, such error, and such wrong, as must be exceedingly injurious to the cause of religion, and deeply wounding to Christ in the members of his body? If so; is it not important, that proper and Christian means be employed to maintain the cause of truth, and the instituted order of the kingdom of Christ; and to diffuse, on these interesting subjects, such light as shall tend to further the great purposes of God's gracious and everlasting covenant, to promote the purity, unity and peace of his churches, and to confirm the faith of his believing people in his precious promises to them and their children? Has there not been in these respects, a very great and a very faulty deficiency? And for this deficiency are not our churches, in the righteous providence of God, most severely tried, and most solemnly reprov'd?

But my brethren, while we contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints, let us do it in the spirit of Christian meekness and candor. Let no wrath, nor clamor, nor evil speaking, ever be known among us. While we differ from our brethren in some interesting points, and firmly maintain, in opposition to them, our scriptural views of God's gracious covenant: let us cordially unite with them in support of the truths, in which we are agreed, exercise towards them the most perfect kindness and charity, and devoutly rejoice in whatever of the true work of divine grace may be discovered among them.

O, may the set time to favor Zion come, when *her watchmen shall lift up their voice, AND WITH THEIR VOICE TOGETHER SHALL SING, SEEING EYE TO EYE; and when all the people of the Lord shall have ONE HEART, AND ONE WAY, that they may fear before him forever, for the good of them; AND OF THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM.*

AMEN.

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
VOL. I.
BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. ALLEN, 1822.

SERIOUS AND CANDID
LETTERS

TO THE

REV. THOMAS BALDWIN, D. D.

ON HIS BOOK,

ENTITLED

“THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY,

AND THE

PARTICULAR COMMUNION

OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.”

—*—
BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M.
—*—

How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing prove?
JOB.

SALEM:

PRINTED BY HAVEN POOL, FOR THE AUTHOR.

1807.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT :

§Seal§ BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the eighteenth day of April, in the thirty first year of the Independence of the United States of America, SAMUEL WORCESTER, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit :

“ Serious and candid Letters to the Rev. Thomas Baldwin, D. D. on his Book intitled, ‘ The Baptism of Believers only, and the particular communion of the Baptist Churches explained and vindicated.’ By SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M.
How forcible are right words ! but what doth your arguing prove ?
JOB.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intitled, “ An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned ;” and also to an Act intitled, “ An Act supplementary to an Act, intitled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching Historical and other Prints.”

WILLIAM S. SHAW, { Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

ABOUT sixteen years ago, my beloved brother, of Thornton, had occasion to address to you, from the press, a "Friendly Letter," with reference to a publication of your's on the subject of close, or "Particular Communion." "The Letter," owing to some casualty, or mistake, failed of reaching you, directly from him. Copies of it however, at his particular instance, were forwarded to you, by two of his brothers; with an apology for the failure, and a respectful assurance, that it was not to be imputed to any culpable inattention on his part. But the apology, it appears, unhappily did not succeed to conciliate your forgiveness: for, in your reply to the Friendly Letter, you were particular to let it be understood, that you had "not the pleasure of acknowledging his politeness in sending you a copy."

With this proof before me, that you are not inattentive to these points of courtesy, I can by no means impute it to any fault of yours, that "I have not the pleasure of acknowledging" the receipt from you, or even from your "generous brothers," of your recent publication, in which you have condescended to honor me with a liberal share of your notice.

Your book, however, I have been so happy, as otherwise pretty seasonably to obtain, and have perused it, as I trust, with candour and attention. Though I have found in it nothing material, of the nature of argument, which I have not often seen, or heard, before; and nothing, except your assumed distinction between the

covenant of the church, and the promise first made to Abraham at the time of his call, which has not been repeatedly answered: yet candidly to review it before the public, will probably be thought to devolve on me as a duty. This duty I shall endeavour to fulfil, according to the ability and opportunity given me, in this, and several subsequent Letters.

On the first passage of my eye, over your book, I experienced, I confess, not a little disappointment, in not being able to find in it any notice of my brother's "Candid Discussion," in answer to your "Brief Vindication." Seeing, that you had again published your first piece, with reference to which his "Friendly Letter" was written, and your second piece, which you intended as an answer to his "Friendly Letter;" I certainly did expect, that somewhere in the long Appendix, subjoined, some mention, at least, would have been found of his last reply. Perhaps this expectation was unreasonable. Unquestionably it was with you to determine what you would write and publish, and what you would not; and if you thought my brother's "Candid Discussion" unworthy of your notice, or if you considered it unanswerable, you certainly were not obliged to answer it.

To some, however, it might have been a satisfaction, had you condescended to acknowledge, that, to what you have now published, as your "Second Part," as well as to your "First," you had received a reply. But as you have not, and as many in the world are not always inclined to the most favorable constructions of things; you will not be surprised, if some, who have read the "Candid Discussion," are ready to conclude, that you chose to pass it by in silence, because, as you perceived it would be difficult to answer it, you were willing to give it no further publicity.

That it was not because my brother did not write with candour, no one, I believe, who has any acquaintance with him, or his writings, will be disposed to admit; for notwithstanding any implications to the contrary, which appear in your "Second Part," his candour has been acknowledged on all hands. By some of the more impartial and judicious, even of your own denomination, it has, to my knowledge, been allowed, that, in your controversy with him, you certainly had not the advantage in point of candour, any more than in point of argument.

This, sir, I would gladly have been excused from saying; but less than this, situated as I am, justice to my brother, to the public, and to the cause of truth, would not permit me to say.

The "First Part" of your book, which is professedly on the subject of *close communion*, appears to have been intended, rather as a warm address to the feelings of your brethren, than as an argumentative treatise. Many of the things in this address, particularly respecting the christian church, I consider, for substance, correct; though from the manner, in which they are presented and applied, I must certainly take leave to dissent. But the *close communion* principle and practice, which it was your professed design to justify and promote, my brother's "Friendly Letter," and other publications, on the same subject, have clearly, I think, shewn to be utterly indefensible, upon any scriptural, or christian grounds.

Your "Second Part," which is professedly a reply to the "Friendly Letter," not confined to the subject of close communion, embraces, among other things, the principal points in dispute, between the pædobaptists and antipædobaptists. To this "Part," particularly, my brother's "Candid Discussion of some interesting Questions, &c." was intended, and, I believe, will still be considered, as an answer.

Your "Appendix," now subjoined to your former publications, makes your "Third," and principal "Part." In this "Part" you have thought proper to bring forward, anew, most of the things contained in your former Parts, with considerable additions and amplifications, and with augmented zeal.

In the first "Section" of your Appendix, containing some general and desultory remarks, you manifest great uneasiness, that you and your brethren should be so earnestly pressed on the subject of *close communion*. Here you are pleased to ask, "For what purpose is this *hue and cry* set up about close communion?" And you intimate that "the true answer to this question would be, because it is known to be the most *popular* objection against" your "sentiments." Whether there be in this any intended reflection, or aspersion, I am not concerned to enquire. But as a friend to truth and Christian unity, I take leave to assure you, that I esteem it a subject of thankfulness and congratulation, if it be a fact,

that fair and candid opposition to your close communion is "*popular*." For the honour of the Christian name, for the prosperity of the Christian cause, I hope it will continue to be "*popular*," and increasingly "*popular*," till the whole body of Christ's people, losing their distinctions of party and of name, shall cordially unite, in the bonds of pure charity and fellowship.

In the second Section of your Appendix, you undertake to consider "the Arguments for Infant Membership in the Gospel Church, inferred from" what you choose to call "the Covenant of Circumcision:" and in the third, "Whether the Jewish and Christian Churches are the same?" Whatever of argument you have thought proper to intersperse in these Sections, among other things, which many will probably suppose might very well have been spared, will claim my particular attention.

In your fourth Section, containing "Strictures on the Rev. Peter Edward's Candid Reasons for renouncing the principles of Antipædobaptism," if I do not exceedingly misjudge, you have been peculiarly unhappy. Had you treated Mr. Edwards and his "Candid Reasons," in a very different manner, you would have found in your "Strictures," I am persuaded, in the sober hour of review, much less cause than you now will find, for painful regret.

In the fifth, sixth, and seventh Sections of your Appendix, you have given "Strictures" on my "Two Discourses, on the Perpetuity and Provision of God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed;" attempted "to vindicate the Baptists from some things respecting them, advanced in those Discourses; and occasionally glanced, in passing, at the Rev. Dr. Osgood, Mr. Austin, and Mr. Anderson. What you have exhibited in these three Sections, I shall have occasion in my subsequent Letters, particularly to consider. At present I will only observe, that your Strictures, and attempts at vindication, so far from weakening my confidence, in the cause which I have undertaken to maintain, have had the effect to strengthen me in the belief, that the principles of my Discourses are such as can never be shaken, and that a firm and religious adherence to them is of high and everlasting importance.

In your eighth and last Section, you have resumed your

favorite subject of *close communion*; and have given, I think, additional proof how difficult it is to support that practice by christian argument, or even to write in favor of it with a christian spirit.

Of the spirit and manner of your book, at large, could I express myself in terms of unqualified commendation, it would certainly afford me a peculiar satisfaction. Professions, indeed, you have been pleased to advance many, and they will all, I trust, be duly appreciated.

The general subject of this controversy is certainly a subject never to be treated with lightness, with contumely, or with asperity. If the professed friends of God, when disputing upon questions relating to his gracious covenant, and his sacred institutions, cannot display the spirit of christian seriousness, and candour, and charity; by whom, and on what occasions, is this amiable and excellent spirit to be displayed?

Truth, indeed, must be exhibited; misrepresentation must be corrected; argument must be applied; fallacy must be exposed; and error must be exploded. But a wide difference there certainly is, though but too often unobserved, between the faithful severity of truth, and the passionate asperity of prejudice; between serious animadversion, and opprobrious invective; between a solemn representation of fact, and railing accusation. And if mild and dignified irony, or satire, be occasionally admissible; it certainly but ill becomes the Christian disputant to descend to low and indiscriminate ridicule.

These, Sir, are my present impressions; and under these impressions, I hope, undeviatingly, to conduct my part of this serious dispute. But I exceedingly regret, that in the course of these Letters, some things will unavoidably fall in my way, which cannot, I am afraid, be justly noticed, without offence. I ask it however, as a piece of justice, not to be blamed, or charged with undue severity, for any *fair* and *necessary* representation, however disagreeable, or unpleasant, the thing represented may be.

In your general "Preface," referring to my "Two Discourses," you have this observation: "As these Discourses are designed not only to strengthen and support Pædobaptism, but to pull down and bring into disrepute the sentiments of his Baptist neighbors, who dwell

peaceably by him, we make no apology for attempting to prove his misstatements and misrepresentations." As the "peaceable" manner, in which "Baptists" are accustomed "to dwell by" their "neighbors" is, generally well known; and as it is obvious, that whatever is done "to strengthen and support" truth, is, of necessary consequence, so much done "to pull down, and bring into disrepute" the opposite error; any remarks, in reply, upon these points, would probably be deemed superfluous. *As much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men, and earnestly to contend for the faith, once delivered to the Saints,* are important, and unquestionably harmonious, Christian injunctions.

If you supposed, that I had published "misstatements and misrepresentations," you certainly had occasion to "make no apology for attempting to prove" and correct them. But whether you have succeeded in this attempt, or whether, in fact, any "misstatements" or "misrepresentations" are chargeable to my account, the candid public, after attending to both sides, will be in a situation to judge.

To "invite you to the contest," as you have been pleased to intimate, was certainly far from my intention. To instruct and establish the people of my charge, in what I then believed, and still believe, to be important truth, and to fortify their minds against the influence of what I then believed, and still believe, to be hurtful error, was the honest design of my Discourses; which were written and delivered, without any view to a publication from the press.

That great exertions have been made to raise a prejudice against me, for the part which I have felt it my duty to take, in this common cause, I am fully apprized; and I certainly have no pretensions to a stoical indifference, either to the displeasure of opponents, or to the uncomfortable feelings of honest, but unstable, or misjudging, friends. My duty, however, I must fulfil; and if any thing is to be done for the cause of truth, and for the kingdom of the Redeemer, no considerations, of a nature personal to myself, are to deter me from the attempt.

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER II.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN the commencement of your "STRICTURES" on my "TWO DISCOURSES," you are pleased to inform your readers, that you will "attempt, *first*, to prove, that Mr. Worcester has totally mistaken the *promise* in his text; that the apostle referred to a promise entirely distinct from that from which he has reasoned."*

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. iii. 29. This was my text. The *promise*, which you suppose, I have "mistaken," I understand to be the one, to which reference is had in the last clause of the text, *according to which all, who are Christ's, are Abraham's seed, and heirs.*

To prove my mistake, you undertake to shew, that the *promise*, to which, in my text, the apostle refers, is the same, which he had cited, in the eighth verse of my context, viz. *In thee shall all nations be blessed;* that "this promise was made twenty-four years before the covenant of circumcision existed;" and "that it was not directly connected with, nor included in that covenant." Having, as you suppose, established these premises, you proceed very triumphantly to "the conclusion, that Mr. Worcester has totally mistaken the promise in his text;" as it is to be "kept in mind, that the promise made to Abraham and his seed, in the covenant of circumcision is the *datum*, from which he reasons." Thus by one tremendous blow, my "whole labored superstructure," as you are pleased to declare, "is left without foundation;" and for "the fate of such a building" you refer your readers to "the close of the sixth chapter of Luke."

Really, Sir, this is doing the business off hand; and you and your brethren, I doubt not, have reciprocated very cordial felicitations, on seeing it so easily, and so quickly dispatched. But reluctant as I may be to interrupt your joy, I must take leave to assure you, that, unless I am under an unaccountable illusion, my "superstructure" has stood your blow unshaken, and still rests secure, on a firm and immoveable basis.

* Appendix, p. 258.

In all which you have offered in the pages now under immediate review, I have found nothing, as I recollect, of which I was not previously aware. I was aware, that the *promise*, referred to in my text, was supposed to be the same, which was cited in the eighth verse of the context; I was aware that this promise was first given to Abraham, about twenty-four years before the covenant with him was sealed, with the *sign of circumcision*; I was aware, that, by the Antipædobaptists, this promise, was not allowed to be included in the covenant, of which circumcision was the *seal*; and I was aware of all the arguments which you have advanced, in support of their opinion. It behoves me, therefore, to confess, that, if I have erred in this point, my error has not the excuse of ignorance; but is attended with all the aggravations to be incurred, from what you seem to consider as very clear light,

“If Mr. Worcester,” you say, “can honorably extricate himself from the foregoing dilemma, he will undoubtedly do it; and in doing it he will instruct the writer of these Strictures, and probably relieve some of his brethren, who have, it is thought, already felt the difficulty.” What the “dilemma” is, to which you have reduced me, or what the “difficulty,” which, as you are pleased to intimate, my brethren have felt, I am really, at present, unable to perceive; but I shall certainly attempt “honorably” to shew, that in the part of your Strictures, now in view, you have only *so fought, as one who beateth the air*.

In my present Letter, I shall endeavour to make it appear, that should it even be admitted, that your views of the promise in my text are, correct, it would by no means follow, that my Discourses “are without foundation.”—And afterwards, in some subsequent Letters, I trust I shall not fail to prove, that the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was really included in the covenant, of which circumcision was an instituted seal.

You are careful particularly to request your readers “to keep in mind, that the promise made to Abraham and his seed, in the covenant of circumcision, is the *datum*, from which the author of the Discourses reasons.” But “the promise made to Abraham and his seed, in this covenant, is not,” you contend, “the promise to which the apostle” in my text “refers.” Hence

you conclude, that my "whole superstructure is without foundation." But is not this, Sir, an extraordinary conclusion? My whole Discourses "without foundation," merely because, as you suppose, I mistook the sense of my text!

Will you undertake to maintain, that the doctrine of a Sermon can have no foundation, unless it be supported by the text? Certainly you will not. Of what avail, then, is your "mathematical demonstration?"

Were your premises to be admitted in their utmost extent, they would only go to evince, that I have transgressed that rule of correct sermonizing, which requires that the text be such, as fairly to support the doctrine. But this, Sir, is a very different thing from proving, that my doctrine is "without foundation." Had I chosen for my text 1 Chron. i. 1, *Adam, Sheth, Enosh*; and stated as my doctrine from it, THAT ALL MANKIND ARE DEPRAVED; my doctrine, though not supported by the text, might nevertheless have been well founded, and my arguments in support of it, scriptural and conclusive.

The great doctrine of my Discourses is distinctly stated, and my arguments, in support of it, are drawn from no less than five very copious scriptural topics. These arguments you have not thought proper directly to encounter; nor are they, in any degree, shaken, by any indirect strokes, which you have occasionally aimed at them. And be assured, Sir, as long as those five pillars stand, should it ever be proved, that I was under a mistake with respect to my text, I shall have but little fear, that my superstructure will fall for the want of "foundation."

But be pleased to observe, Sir, I have not conceded, nor shall I at present concede, that my doctrine is not fairly supported by my text.

Could it even be proved, as I am confident it cannot, that the promise to which reference is had in the last clause of my text, did not belong to the covenant, on which the church was founded in Abraham's family; it would certainly, however, be allowed, that *this* important sentiment is upon the very face of the text, *that all true believers are children of Abraham, and as his children, heirs*. But to what are believers, as the children of Abraham, *heirs*? Undoubtedly to that *righteousness*

of faith, of which circumcision was an appointed *seal*; and, generally, to that glorious inheritance, which was given, by covenant, to Abraham, as the patriarch of the church. But if believers throughout all generations, are thus divinely constituted children of Abraham, and as his children heirs; can it admit of a question, whether *that church*, of which he was the patriarch, and *that covenant*, by which the inheritance was secured to him and his seed, *were intended to continue to the latest ages of the world*. This is the doctrine which I advanced from the text; and I ask you, Sir, candidly, is it not fairly deducible? Had I even omitted the last clause, with respect to which you suppose I was under a mistake; still would not the rest of the text have been sufficient for the support of my doctrine?

Will you inform me, Sir, how believers in Christ become the children of Abraham, and, as his children, *are blessed with him* and made heirs of the inheritance conveyed to him; if it be not by virtue of that covenant, by which the church was formed in his family? And how can they be children and heirs, by virtue of that covenant, unless the covenant, and the church formed by it, be still continued?

Some persons, within my knowledge, have undertaken to say, they did not believe there was ever such a man, as the Rev. Peter Edwards, author of *Candid Reasons for renouncing the Principles of Antipædobaptism*; seeming to imagine, that if the author were set aside, all the arguments contained in his book must fall of course! It is seriously submitted, Sir, for your consideration, whether, with respect to my *Discourses*, you have not adopted a similar method. Having, as you supposed, set aside the text, you conclude, with great assurance, that the whole must fall!

By this ingenious method, you undoubtedly proposed to save yourself the task of answering the arguments, by which the great doctrine of my *Discourses* was supported; a task, which you probably perceived, it would be difficult to perform. But the infelicity is, that not only no discerning reader will suppose, that merely setting aside the text would overthrow the doctrine; but the text, after all your labor to remove it, still gives to the doctrine a firm support.

This, though already very clear, will appear, I trust, with still greater clearness, from what I have further to communicate.

Your's, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER III.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my last Letter, I endeavored to shew, that, should your views of the promise, referred to in my text, be admitted as correct, it would by no means follow, that my Discourses are "without foundation." I shall now, in this, and some subsequent Letters, attempt to shew, that your views are *not* correct; and that the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was really included in the covenant of the church, of which circumcision was an instituted seal.

To elude the pressure of our arguments from the Abrahamic covenant, you and your brethren have assumed a distinction between the covenant, first proposed to Abraham at the time of his call, and the covenant, twenty-four years afterwards established with him and sealed with *the sign of circumcision*; as if there were two entirely unconnected, and different covenants. This distinction, I consider a mere assumption. On a candid attention to the subject, it will appear, I think, beyond all reasonable dispute, that there never was, in fact, but one covenant made with Abraham;* and that in that one covenant all the precious promises to him were included.

The *work of redemption*, is the great work of God, by which, from eternity, he purposed to make known to the *principalities and powers, in heavenly places, his manifold wisdom*. This *work*, though composed of many parts, and continued, from age to age, under different dispensa-

* Unless, indeed, the covenant respecting Canaan, which was confirmed by the *smoking furnace and the burning lamp*, be considered a distinct covenant, though afterwards including the other.

tions, is *one*; the church of the redeemed is *one*, and the covenant with the church is *one*.

Immediately after the apostacy, in Paradise, the work of redemption commenced. *The voice of the Lord God was heard, walking in the garden in the cool of the day.* Having summoned the guilty parents of our race before him, and examined them on the subject of their revolt; the Lord God turned to the serpent, and, in their hearing, said to him, *Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* AND I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN THEE AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN THY SEED AND HER SEED: IT SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL. *Gen. iii. 14, 15.*

This may, with strictness, be considered as *the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* In the tremendous sentence pronounced upon the serpent and his seed, was the first exhibition, or revelation, of the eternal counsel of peace, or covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son, which is the unchangeable foundation and source of all the merciful dispensations to our fallen race. "This curse upon satan contains the sum of all blessings, which a merciful God bestows on sinful men!—It is a *prophecy*, and a *promise*, which have ever since been fulfilling, but have not yet received their entire accomplishment. It comprises the whole gospel, and a prophetic history of the opposition, with which it should meet, and the success, with which it should be crowned, in all ages and countries, to the end of time. Indeed almost the whole history of the church, and of the world, through time and to eternity is compendiously delineated in this singular verse."*

By *the seed of the woman*, with almost universal consent, we are here to understand, *Christ as preeminent, and all his believing people, as one with him, and members of the mystical body, of which he is the head.* Christ and his people, of all ages and nations, are *the seed of the woman*, in contradistinction to satan and all who adhere to his cause, designated as *the serpent and his seed.* In this construction all the principal commentators agree.

* Scott's Com. Gen. iii. Wetsius's Divine Economy, Book IV. Chap. 1. Edwards Hist. Redemp. Period 1. Sect. 1.

In this early promise, Christ was presented, as a COVENANT *for the people*; and upon the ground of this promise, the church of his redeemed, commencing with the first human pair, was originally founded.*

With reference to this promise, sacrifices were divinely instituted, as types of the great atonement to be made once in the end of the world, and as sacred memorials of Gods *new*, † and gracious, and everlasting covenant.

By faith in this promise, *Adam called his wife's name Eve*; because as the constituted mother of the promised seed, including the Messiah and all his believing people, *she was the mother of all LIVING, or of all LIFE*. By faith in this promise, *Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain*. By faith in this promise, the people of God, in the days of Enos, *began to call upon, or (according to the original text,) to call themselves by, the name of the Lord*; thus distinguishing themselves from the rest of the world, by an open and solemn profession. And by faith in this promise, from time to time, in some manner and form, renewed and confirmed, the church of God was continued, from generation to generation, to the days of Noah, and thence to the days of Abraham. ‡

From the beginning, until the Abrahamic dispensation, the church, so far as we can learn from the sacred oracles, was continued in the *domestic, or family state*. The patriarch of a family was also the patriarch of that part, or branch, of the church, which the members of his family composed. ||

But for wise and important purposes, the Lord, in due time, saw fit to bring his church into a more compact, and more regularly organized, body; favored with a clearer dispensation of his covenant, and distinguished by a more special and visible *seal*.

In pursuance of this great design, he called Abraham *to go out from his country and his kindred, and his father's house, into a land, which he would shew him*; that, in his family, the church might be regularly formed, and that

* Edwards *ibid.* Muirhead's Dissertations, Introduction.

† *New*, in contradistinction to the first, or *old*, covenant of works, made with Adam on the day of his creation.

‡ Scott, Witsius, Edwards, and Muirhead, *ibid.*

|| Muirhead's Diss. *ibid.*

with him, as the heir of the world, and the constituted father of all them that believe, his everlasting covenant might be established. And from that memorable period, forward to the end of time, the church was to be considered as one great family, composed of the children, either natural, or adopted, of Abraham; and, accordingly, in Abraham, as the constituted patriarch, all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

At the time of Abraham's call, the promise, *In thee shall all nations, or all the families of the earth, be blessed*, was first made to him. This, as you yourself suppose, and as none I believe will deny, is the very same promise, or a promise of the same comprehensive import, with that, first made in Paradise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*.

Now, Sir, suffer me to ask; is not the representation, here briefly given, correct and scriptural?

Is not the work of redemption *one*, though in constant progression? Is not the church of the redeemed, though under different dispensations, throughout all ages, *one*? Was not the church primævally founded on the gracious promise of the Messiah, first given in Paradise? And did it not continue upon that foundation, till the days of Abraham?

Was not the promise to Abraham, *in thee, and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, though different in form, yet (as in your book you have conceded) in substance the same, with that given in Paradise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*? And if so; then did not this same promise continue to be the foundation of the church, under the Abrahamic dispensation, as before, from the beginning, it had been?

Was there not in the days of Abraham a great and important advance? Was not the church at that period advanced to a higher state, under a clearer and more favorable dispensation? And is it, then, to be supposed, that in this its advanced state, it was removed from the foundation of a promise, *comprising the Messiah and all the blessings of his kingdom*, and placed upon the foundation of a promise, or promises, of a very different nature, and *comprising only temporal blessings*?

Certainly, Sir, it is not to be supposed, that after resting for two thousand years, from Adam to Abraham, upon a promise, including all the blessings of salvation;

the church of God, thus advanced to a higher state, was placed, for a thousand years, from Abraham to Christ, on the foundation of merely temporal promises. No, Sir; *other foundation can no man lay*, for the church of God, in any period of the world, *than that which is laid, even Christ.*

For what purpose, it might be asked, was the great promise, comprising the Messiah and all the blessings of his kingdom, renewed, at the time of Abraham's call; if, under the dispensation, then to take place, the church was not to be grounded upon it?

Undoubtedly, Sir, as the church, formed in Abraham's family, was but a continuation of the same church of God, which, two thousand years before, commenced with the believing first parents of our race, so it remained, though under a different economy, yet on the same foundation: And on the same foundation, though under different economies, the same church has remained to the present day, and will remain, *as long as the moon endureth.*

This, in my subsequent Letters, I shall endeavor very amply to prove and illustrate. In the mean time, I remain,

Your's, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER IV.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN order the more fully to see, that the covenant with Abraham was but *one*, and contained all the great and precious promises, ever made to him; it may be useful to take a connected view of God's covenant transactions with that distinguished patriarch.

Somewhat more than 2000 years after the creation, and about 426 years after the flood, at a time, when the descendants of Noah had very generally apostatized from the true religion, and devoted themselves to idolatry; *The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's*

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house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED. Gen. xxii. 1—3. *By faith Abraham obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went.*

On his arrival at Moreh, in the land of Canaan, the same year of his departure from Haran, *the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him.* Gen. xii. 7.

On the departure of Lot from between Bethel and Ai, where Abram sojourned, about three or four years after his first arrival in Canaan, *the Lord said to Abram, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.* Gen. xiii. 14—16. *Then Abram removed his tent, from between Bethel and Ai, to the plain of Mamre in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.*

About eight years after his arrival in Canaan, on his return from his memorable expedition against Chedorlaomer and his confederates, *the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. In that same day, after giving him assurances of a son for his heir, and foretelling him the affliction of his posterity in Egypt, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates; and this covenant was confirmed, by the smoking furnace, and the burning lamp, passing between the parts of the slain beasts and birds.* Gen. xv. 1—18.

After this solemn transaction, it does not appear, that the Lord spake again to Abram, until about twenty-four years after his removal from Haran.

But *when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; * walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

* In the original Hebrew, the word is *El Shaddai*, of which a more proper rendering would be, GOD ALL SUFFICIENT. It is particularly observable, that it was on this occasion, when he

*And I will make my covenant between me and thee; and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham: for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will ESTABLISH my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. On this memorable occasion, the outward rite of *circumcision* was instituted, as a *TOKEN* of the covenant; and on the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and all the males of his household. Gen. xvii.*

After this solemn transaction, but in the same year, the Lord appeared to Abraham twice; once on occasion of the destruction of Sodom;* and afterwards on occasion of Sarah's proposal, after the birth of Isaac, *to cast out the bond woman and her son;*† on both which occasions he graciously gave a renewal of his promises.

About twenty-six years after the formal establishment of the church in Abrahams family, as the last special trial of his faith and obedience, the Lord was pleased to command Abraham to take his son Isaac, then about twenty-five years of age, and offer him up as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains of Moriah. On this solemn and affecting occasion, after Abraham had given proof of his entire devotion to the divine will, *the angel of the Lord called to him out of Heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate*

appeared for the purpose of *establishing* his covenant with Abraham, that, for the first time, God revealed himself in this majestic and glorious name. Was it, then, to ratify a covenant merely temporal?

* Gen. xviii. 1—29.

† Ibid. xxi. 12, 15.

of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.
Gen. xxii.

Upon this connected view of these interesting transactions, I take leave to suggest, for your consideration, a few very plain remarks.

1. In the first extraordinary call of Abraham, the Lord had, undoubtedly, some great and important design. But what was his design? For what purpose did he call Abraham, to leave his country, and his connexions, and to go into a land, in which he was a stranger? The answer is obvious. It was, that he might establish the church in Abraham's family, for the honor of his own great name, and for the extensive and lasting good of mankind. But

2. The church was not immediately established on Abrahams arrival in Canaan. Previously to its establishment about twenty-four years elapsed. What was the reason of this delay? The answer again is obvious. It was, that opportunity might be given for the trial, and exemplary manifestation, of Abrahams faith. As he was to be constituted the patriarch of the church, and *the father of all that believe*, it was evidently of high importance, that his faith should be proved, and illustriously displayed, previous to his receiving the seal of his high designation. Hence the delay of the solemn transaction ; hence the scenes of trial, through which the favored patriarch was called to pass.

3. Before the formal establishment of the church in his family, the Lord appeared, and spoke to Abraham, at several different times. For what purpose was this? Undoubtedly for the purpose of encouraging and sustaining the patriarch's faith. At the time of his call, the Lord promised Abraham, that if he would depart from his country and connexions, unto a land which should be shewn him ; *he would make of him a great nation, would bless him, would make his name great, would make him a blessing, and in him all nations should be blessed.* *By faith in these general promises, Abraham obeyed, and went forth, not knowing whither he went.* On his arrival in Canaan, a sojourner in a strange land, the Lord graciously met with him, and, for the first time, gave him the promise of that land. This was a more

particular promise, than any which before he had received; and was evidently very seasonable and well adapted for his encouragement and support. And on an attentive review of the several gracious appearances, which the Lord was pleased to vouchsafe to Abraham, it will readily be seen, that the promises and renewals of promises, occasionally made to him, became more and more particular and clear, and were evidently calculated, and intended, to encourage and support the patriarch's faith.

4. When the appointed time arrived, for the formal establishment of the church in Abraham's family, the divine appearance to him was peculiarly solemn and glorious.

The Lord appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am EL SHADDAI, GOD ALL SUFFICIENT; walk before me and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant with thee. The manner in which, on this occasion, he was pleased to manifest himself, so far transcended in glory, all his former manifestations, that, like Job when he said, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee,* Abraham was overwhelmed and fell upon his face. What was the design of this manifestation, so transcendently majestic and glorious? Was it not to prepare the patriarch's mind for the high transaction to be attended, and to give both to him, and his seed, throughout all generations, the most ample and solid ground for confidence, that all the great and precious promises, made to him, and now solemnly to be ratified and sealed, would be duly fulfilled?

Hitherto Abraham had not been particularly informed of the great design, for which he was called to sojourn in a strange land. He had received assurances, indeed, that he was divinely designated for some high purpose; that the Lord would *bleſs him, and make his name great, and that in him all nations should be bleſſed.* But how, or by what means, he had not been informed, nor could he have had any distinct idea.

But now, having passed the prerequisite term and course of trial, and given those proofs of faith and obedience, which were important to be exhibited in him, who was to be publicly constituted *the father of believers;* the Lord appeared to him, and in a manner becoming

the glory of EL SHADDAI, disclosed to him the great design of his call, and the appointed way, in which the previous promises, made to him, were to have their fulfilment. He was given to understand, that he was divinely appointed to be, not only the father of the Messiah, but also the patriarch of the church; and that in this his distinguished capacity it was, that according to the promises first made to him at the time of his call, he was to be peculiarly *blessed*, his *name was to be great*, and in him all nations were to be blessed.

Accordingly, on this important occasion, his name was changed from *Abram to Abraham*. Because, said Jehovah, *a father of many nations have I made*, or constituted, thee; the promises were reduced to the form of a covenant; a covenant, by which the church was formally constituted in his family, and which was solemnly *established*, between God and him and his seed, *for an everlasting covenant*; and as a formal ratification of the high transaction, *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had*, and so illustriously had manifested, *before he was circumcised*.

Please to observe, my dear Sir, *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal*, not merely of the temporal inheritance of Canaan, but of the **RIGHTEOUSNESS of the faith, which he had**, in the divine promises, *before made to him*, and now solemnly renewed, ratified, and *confirmed*. And on the selfsame day, Abraham was circumcised, and all the males of his household, and the church was regularly formed.

5. About twenty-six years after the formal establishment of the church, the Lord appeared to Abraham, for the last time, on a most solemn and affecting occasion; and, with the highest solemnity, gave him the finishing confirmation of the covenant. Previous to this, indeed, the patriarch was favored with two special divine appearances; one at his tent door in Mamre, the other at Gerar, or Beersheba, where Isaac was born. At each of these appearances, he was graciously encouraged, and strengthened in his faith, as before he had been, by a renewal and confirmation of promises. But the appearance at Moriah, at the time of the oblation of Isaac, demands more particular attention.

On this awful occasion, *the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn,*

*saith the Lord, in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore;—and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.—*What was the design of this last extraordinary confirmation? The apostle to the Hebrews furnishes the answer. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who are fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

At the trying command of Jehovah, the venerable patriarch of the church, who had received the promises, took his beloved Isaac, in whom under God, his dearest hopes were placed, to the land of Moriah; and there, upon one of the mountains, probably the very same on which the prefigured Messiah was, eighteen hundred years afterwards, crucified, bound him upon the altar, for a bloody sacrifice. “We have much reason to believe,” in this, Sir, I agree with you perfectly, “that in this transaction, Abraham saw more of the mystery of redemption, through the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, than he had ever seen before.” He had, indeed, in a figure, *the LAMB OF GOD, that taketh away the sins of the world,* and by whose atoning blood all the promises of the covenant are sealed, sacrificed before him.

This was, undoubtedly, a most solemn *sacramental* transaction, by which the holy covenant received its highest confirmation. Abraham had before received the sacrament of circumcision, a *seal* of the same general import with baptism; he now attended a sacramental transaction, of the same general import, (as was afterwards the passover,) with the sacrament of the holy supper, in which the sacrifice of the Messiah is evidently set forth.

I now ask you, dear Sir, candidly and seriously to review these covenant transactions; and then to “lay your hand upon your heart” and say, whether your representations of them are just. Are these transactions to be treated with lightness?—If “the covenant of circumcision is a general topic resorted to by the advocates for infant baptism;” is this to be proclaimed, with an air of

contempt! Can any person, duly impressed with the love and fear of the God of Abraham, attend to these promises and transactions, and the solemn and affecting circumstances, with which they were accompanied; and not, while his heart melts within him, esteem himself happy, if, through sovereign grace, he may only lay his humble claim to a part in the blessings, with which the **ALL SUFFICIENT GOD** condescended to endow the venerable patriarch and his seed?—For myself, Sir, may I never be reproached for any thing else, but a firm and faithful adherence to this covenant.

But to return to the point: In the connected view, now taken of these covenant transactions, is there to be seen the least shadow of foundation, for the distinction, on which you have insisted, between the covenant, to which was affixed the outward seal of circumcision, and a former more important covenant with Abraham?

That promises were made, and renewed, and confirmed, to Abraham, at several different times, during the space of about fifty years, is certain; but was there, Sir, a new and distinct covenant made, at each of the several times of the Lord's appearance to him, for the renewal and confirmation of his promises. Is it not, on the contrary, most evident, that all the promises were intimately connected, had respect to one great object, and were summed up in one covenant, and that all these covenant transactions were, but so many wisely arranged parts of one great and interesting whole?

Was not the establishment of the church in his family, as one visible body, the obvious purpose, for which Abraham was first called to leave his native country? Was not the delay of this establishment evidently intended to afford opportunity, for the trial, and manifestation of the patriarch's faith? Were not all the divine appearances to him and the promises and renewals of promises, previous to the *formal* institution of the church, manifestly preparatory to that high transaction? Was not *the sign of circumcision*, which he received, *a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had before*, as well as at the time, he was circumcised; and by that sacred seal, were not all the promises, ever made to him and his seed, solemnly ratified and confirmed? And was not the solemn oath of God, at the time of his last extraordinary appearance, graciously intended to give to the same covenant, which

before was sealed with the sign of circumcision, its highest possible confirmation; that the patriarch, and all his faithful seed to the end of the world, might have strong consolation?

To me, at least, the whole appears with a degree of clearness not to be resisted; and I confess, Sir, it is not without astonishment, that I have observed attempts by men, who profess to know and venerate the scriptures, to make out two distinct, and unconnected, covenants with Abraham:—attempts, in my view, violently to put asunder, what God has joined together, and most presumptuously to mar and disarrange the harmonious and beautiful plan of infinite wisdom and grace.

In the view now exhibited of Jehovah's transactions with Abraham, all is harmonious and beautiful; but upon your unfounded hypothesis, all is disjointed and confused. Pardon me, Sir, when I say *unfounded hypothesis*;—for such I certainly consider it; and I see not but that you might as well suppose eight covenants with Abraham, as the two, which you have designated. You might as well talk of the covenant at Ur, or at Haran, of the covenant at Moreh, of the covenant between Bethel and Ai, of the first covenant at Mamre, of the second covenant at Mamre, of the third covenant at Mamre, of the covenant at Gerar, or Beersheba, and of the covenant at Moriah, as of “the covenant of circumcision,” and the covenant twenty four years before.

The promises, first made to Abraham *four hundred and thirty years before the law was added at Horeb*, were from time to time renewed until, about twenty four years after they were first given, they were solemnly ratified and sealed, in the form of a covenant; just as proposals, first made to day, may be renewed at several different times, during any given period, and, at length, may be ratified; and sealed, in the form of a civil contract.

I have more, Sir, to offer upon this subject, but lest I should be tedious, I will extend this Letter no further.

I am still, dear Sir, &c.

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LETTER V.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my last, I presented a connected view of God's covenant transactions with Abraham, from which it must appear, I think, with great clearness, to every unprejudiced mind, that they were all intimately connected, as so many component parts of one great and important whole.

Possibly, however, you may yet be disposed to object, that the gospel promise, more especially in question between us, viz. *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was not explicitly mentioned, at the time the covenant of the church was sealed, with *the sign of circumcision*;* and therefore ought not to be considered as belonging to that covenant.

But unquestionably, Sir, this great promise belonged to some *covenant*, made with Abraham and his seed; for, agreeably to your own acknowledgment, it was to this promise, that the apostle, in my text and context referred, when speaking of the *covenant*. I ask then, to what covenant did this promise belong? If you say, it belonged to that covenant, which was *four hundred and thirty years before the law*; I then ask again, what covenant was that? in what was it different from the covenant afterwards ratified and sealed with the sign of circumcision? and for what purpose was it instituted?

If it was for the purpose of establishing the church in his family, which I believe you will not undertake to deny, that Abraham was called away from his country, at the time the promise, now in question, was first given to him; what shadow of reason is there to suppose, that this promise was not, as others, first given at the same time, certainly were, included in the covenant, by which the church in his family was formed. And especially, Sir, when it is considered that this same promise, for substance, was the very promise, on which, for *two thou-*

* It is true that by the "new testament martyr," Stephen, this covenant is designated as "the covenant of circumcision." Christ also says of the sacramental *cup*, *This is the new testament*. Both expressions are evidently figurative. The sacramental cup is not the new testament itself, but a *seal* of the new testament; and circumcision was not the covenant itself, but a *seal* of the covenant. By applying figurative expressions, in a literal sense, many have been misled.

sand years before, the church had rested; does it not amount to a moral certainty that it was continued, as still the foundation of the church, under the Abrahamic and every succeeding dispensation, and therefore was included in the Abrahamic covenant?

I here repeat the question; is it to be believed, that the church of the living God, when advanced to an improved state, and formed as one visible body, in the family of the constituted *father of the faithful*, was removed from the glorious foundation, on which, for two thousand years before, it had securely rested, and placed upon an entirely different, and merely temporal ground? Certainly this is not to be believed, without some proof, infinitely stronger than your mere assumption.

The truth is, at no less than eight different times the Lord appeared to Abraham, and gave and renewed to him promises; but on each of those occasions, there was some variation with respect to the promises particularized. But although there was a variation, there was yet a similarity, in the promises, sufficient clearly to shew, that they were all intimately connected, that they all had reference to one great object, and all belonged to one comprehensive covenant.

But I have further to observe, that if the promise, *In thee and thy seed, shall all nations be blessed*, was not specially particularized, at the time the covenant was sealed with the *sign of circumcision*; it was nevertheless, evidently comprised in the comprehensive promises expressly mentioned on that occasion. You yourself, indeed, seem to be apprehensive, that it might be comprised in the comprehensive promise, *A Father of many nations have I made thee*. But this promise you attempt to explain away, by connecting it with other promises.

The 'expressions,' *A Father of many nations have I made thee*, and *I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee*, "TAKEN TOGETHER," you assert, "do not amount to a promise, that any nations should be blessed in Abraham." Had not your manner, Sir, been so positive. I might possibly have used the freedom, under authority of the apostle, directly to contradict your assertion. But as the case now is, I take leave to ask, if, by the promise, *A father of many nations I have made*, or, constituted, *thee*, Abraham was made, or constituted, *the*.

father of believers of all nations; then, were not believers of all nations, by the same divine promise, constituted *his children and heirs*? And if, by this promise, believers of all nations are constituted the children of Abraham, and heirs of his blessings; then does it not clearly amount to a promise, that *in him all nations should be blessed*? Is it not by becoming his children and heirs, that any are blessed in him?

But, my dear Sir, that, by this promise Abraham was constituted the father of believers of all nations, and, correlatively, believers of all nations were constituted his children and heirs, was certainly the apostles opinion; for he has quoted the promise to this very purpose. *Therefore it is of faith*, says he, *that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure TO ALL THE SEED; not to that only, which is of the law, but to that, also, which is of the faith of Abraham, WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL, as it is written, A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE THEE.** Thus the apostle considered this promise as having respect to believers of all nations, as Abraham's constituted children and heirs; and, therefore, as clearly "amounting to a promise" that *in him ALL nations should be blessed*.

Whether it was for want of duly considering the connexion, in which this promise, in the Abrahamic covenant stands, and which you suppose so important to be observed, that the apostle held an opinion respecting it, so opposite to yours, I leave, Sir, for you to determine! In the mean time, until you are pleased to offer some proof, other than your bare assertion, however positive, that the apostle was in an error, you will excuse me, if I give the preference to his opinion.

On the whole, the promises, *A father of many nations have I made thee*,—and, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, are clearly correlative promises; and, as such, the one essentially implies the other. For when the patriarch's name was changed from *Abram* to *Abraham*, and he was divinely constituted the *father* of believers of all nations; believers of all nations were, by the same divine act, correlatively constituted *his children and heirs*, and it is by thus being his children and heirs, that any are really *blessed in him*. This, Sir, I consider as clear and direct scripture proof, that the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was essentially included in that co-

* Rom. iv. 16, 17.

venant, which was *established* with Abraham and his seed, at the time he was formally constituted the father of all nations, and as a sacred *seal, received the sign of circumcision.*

To this direct proof, much more, if possible, still clearer and stronger, might be added, some of which, I propose to offer in my next Letter.

Your's, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER VI.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

AS the issue of the serious controversy, between the Pædobaptists and the Antipædobaptists, appears, at present, to be suspended on the question, whether the ancient GOSPEL PROMISE, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed,* were included in the covenant, established with Abraham and his seed, and sealed with *the sign of circumcision*; I shall be justified, I think, in giving, and requesting you to give, to this question, very particular attention. Agreeably, therefore, to my promise, in my last letter, in addition to the evidence already exhibited, that this great promise *was* included in the covenant, I now proceed to offer further proof to the same important point.

In the fourth of Romans, speaking of Abraham, the apostle says: *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised; that he might be, that is, might be solemnly constituted, the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also; or that they might be blessed in him.* The charges, which, with so much zeal, you have been pleased to advance against me, with respect to this passage; and the freedom which you have thought yourself warranted to use with the apostle, I propose so consider in another place. At present, I have only to observe, that the passage, as now quoted, rests upon its own bottom; and if the two exegetical

clauses, which I have inserted, be not correct, you are at liberty to reject them.

I ask, then, does not the apostle, in this passage, directly refer to the establishment of the church in Abraham's family? Does he not say, that, on that memorable occasion, *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a SEAL of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised?* Is it not clearly his sense, that Abraham received the sacred seal, that thus he might be formally constituted the father of believers of all nations? And does he not say, or clearly teach, that all this was done, that unto believers of all nations, as the patriarch's constituted seed, righteousness, even the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, might be imputed?—But, if, at the time the church was established in his family, the patriarch was thus solemnly constituted, the father of believers of all nations, that unto them, as his constituted seed and heirs, the righteousness of faith might be imputed;—then I ask finally, was not the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, essentially included in that covenant, by which the church was then established, and to which the sign of circumcision was affixed, as a sacred seal? This, again, must be admitted as clear and direct proof.

But there is yet, Sir, another consideration, too important to be omitted in this argument.

Abraham was not only an individual believer, but, as it already sufficiently appears, he was divinely constituted the patriarch and representative of the church. Was the promise, then, *In thee and in thy seed, shall all nations be blessed*, merely personal, or was it of a public nature. Did it belong to Abraham only, as a favored individual, or did it belong to him in his public capacity, as the patriarch and representative of the church; and consequently to the church, of which he was the patriarch and representative?

This promise, it is acknowledged, on all hands, comprised the Messiah and all the blessings of his kingdom. It was, for substance, the very same promise with that first given in Paradise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*; and on which the church, while in the family state, for two thousand years, had rested. It was in fact, the GOSPEL, as preached to Abraham, in those early times; and which, afterwards, at sundry times and in divers manners, was more fully and clearly unfolded.

I ask, then, again, did this great promise belong to Abraham as a favored individual only, or did it belong to him, in his public capacity also; and consequently to the church of which he was the constituted patriarch and representative? Unquestionably it belonged to him, in his public capacity, and to that church, *to which pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the PROMISES.*

Yes, Sir, this promise *always* belonged to the church of God; and, therefore, was always included in the covenant by which the church was formed. Accordingly as a covenant promise, it was expressly renewed to Isaac, and to Jacob; and in after-ages, its renewal was often repeated to the Abrahamic church, with increasing clearness and fulness.

After the death of Abraham, the Lord appeared, on a special occasion, to Isaac, and said, *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and will bless thee; for unto thee and unto thy seed will I give all these countries, and I WILL PERFORM THE OATH, WHICH I SWARE UNTO ABRAHAM THY FATHER. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven; and will give unto thy seed all these countries, AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED: because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments and my laws.** You will be pleased to observe, Sir, that, as Abraham in the covenant of the church was expressly required *to walk before God, and be perfect*, as a condition of the promised blessings; so here the Lord expressly assures Isaac, the heir of the promises, that because Abraham had *obeyed*, the promised blessings should be conferred.

You will not, I believe, undertake to deny, that this was, undoubtedly, a renewal with Isaac of the covenant, established with his father, and the *seal* of which was in Isaac's *flesh*. But in this renewal, the promise, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, is not only implicitly, but explicitly, included. How different, Sir, is this from what you have been pleased to assert!

To Jacob, when at Bethel, on his way from Beersheba to Padanaram, the Lord appeared, *and said, I am the*

* Gen. xxvi. 2—5.

*Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whercon thou liest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; —AND IN THEE, AND IN THY SEED, SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.** In this renewal of the covenant with Jacob, almost a hundred and forty years after it was sealed with the sign of circumcision; the great promise in question, was, again, explicitly concluded.

When blessing his sons, just before his decease, Jacob, by the spirit of prophecy said; *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and UNTO HIM SHALL THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE BE†—All the ends of the earth, said David, by the same prophetic spirit, shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. A seed shall serve him, and it shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation.‡* In that day, said the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, *there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: TO IT SHALL THE GENTILES SEEK, AND HIS REST SHALL BE GLORIOUS.—It is a light thing, that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I WILL ALSO GIVE THEE FOR A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT THOU MAYEST BE MY SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.—Arise shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. AND THE GENTILES SHALL COME TO THY LIGHT AND KINGS TO THE BRIGHTNESS OF THY RISING. Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, THAT MEN MAY BRING UNTO THEE THE FORCES OF THE GENTILES; AND THAT THEIR KINGS MAY BE BROUGHT.||*

These, and numerous other similar passages, you will certainly acknowledge to be of the same general import, with the assurance first given in Paradise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, and with the gracious promise to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, *In thee, and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* They are all the SAME GOSPEL, more clearly and fully unfolded, as, from age to age, the work of redemp-

* Gen. xxviii. 13. 14. † Ib. xi. 10. ‡ Psalm xxii. 27, 29. || Isa. xi. 10. xlix. 6. lx. 1—11.

tion proceeded, and the church was advanced. But these, you will please to observe, were all addressed to the church; to the church divinely formed in the family of Abraham; to the ancient *Zion of the Holy One of Israel*: and were, therefore, essentially included, in the covenant, by which the church was established.

Accordingly Zacharias, in the grateful effusion of his heart, in view of the birth of the long expected Messiah, says, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as HE SPOKE BY THE MOUTH OF HIS HOLY PROPHETS, WHICH HAVE BEEN SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN--TO PERFORM THE MERCY PROMISED TO OUR FATHERS, AND TO REMEMBER HIS HOLY COVENANT; THE OATH WHICH HE SWARE TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM.* In this passage again, we have clear and decisive proof, that all the *mercy to be performed*, by the coming of the Messiah, had been *promised to the fathers*, had been *spoken of to the church*, by the *holy prophets*, from the *beginning of the world*, and was comprised in the *holy covenant*, sealed to Abraham and his seed, by the sign of circumcision, and *confirmed by an oath*.

I will here only add the direct testimony of the apostle Peter. After the ascension of the Saviour, addressing himself to the Jews, assembled at the Beautiful gate of the temple, he took occasion to say, *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the COVENANT, WHICH GOD MADE WITH OUR FATHERS, saying unto Abraham, AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE KINDREDS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.* This single testimony, Sir, is of itself conclusive against you. This very promise, which you are pleased repeatedly to assert had no connexion with the covenant of the Abrahamic church, is here, by this distinguished apostle, brought forward as a principal article of *that covenant*: Yes, Sir, a principal article of *that covenant*, of which the Jews were declared to be *the children*.

Is it not, Sir, a very great infelicity, when a sentiment, or scheme, supported by bold assertions, goes so directly in the face of both the Old Testament and New?

With due consideration, your, &c.

Let. E

LETTER VII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IF you have offered any thing, entitled to be called argument, by which to shew, that the ancient *Gospel promise* was not included in the covenant of the ancient church, it is what you have said with reference to the 16th verse of my context. For really, Sir, I consider your "mathematical demonstration," which you appear to have regarded with such parental complacency, as of no more pertinency, or avail, than would have been a "mathematical demonstration," that the renewal of the promises to Isaac was about a hundred years, and to Jacob, about a hundred and sixty years, after they were first sealed to Abraham and his seed, with the sign of circumcision.

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.—"That we might not mistake this," you are pleased to observe, "as referring to the promise made in the covenant of circumcision, and so to Abraham's natural seed, the apostle adds, *He saith not, And to SEEDS, as of many; but as of ONE, and to thy SEED WHICH IS CHRIST.* The promises in the covenant of circumcision were to *many*; to Abraham's *seed generally.*" And in your own manner you proceed to ask, "Will any person presume to say, that these promises referred to Christ, or were made to him; or that he was the seed here intended? Were kings to come out of his loins, and nations to be made of him? Was the land of Canaan promised to Christ for an everlasting possession?"*

In my turn, Sir, permit me to ask, "Will any person presume to say," that the promises were not made to *Abraham*, as well as to his *seed*? Did not "kings come out of his loins," and were not "nations made of him?"—Was not "the land of Canaan" also given "to Christ for an everlasting possession," in the most important sense; literally, in subserviency to his great work of redemption, and typically, in *that better country, which is an heavenly*? And is it not, in scripture, called, *TUY LAND, O IMMANUEL*?—These questions, Sir, are at least, I think, as pertinent as your's.

In contradistinction to *SEED as of one*, you undertake

* Appendix, p. 261.

to say, that “the promises, in the covenant of circumcision were to *many*; to Abraham’s seed *generally* :” and hence you conclude, that the apostle must have “reasoned from a promise entirely distinct from them.”—With great, seriousness, Sir, you will suffer me to ask; did you intend, that your readers should understand that, in what you call “the covenant of circumcision,” the promises were made not to *seed*, as of *one*, that is, one seed; but to *seeds*, as of *many*? If you did not; what pertinency is there in your remark?—If you did, I must take leave to ask, further, by what authority did you attempt to lead your readers into such an understanding of the subject?

Is not the word, “in the covenant of circumcision,” both in the translation, and in the original text, not plural, *seeds*, but singular, *seed*? And both in the translation, and in the original, is not the very same word used, when God says *I will be a God unto thee, and to thy SEED after thee*: as when he says, *and in thy SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*.

I must be indulged the freedom, then, to repeat the question; By what authority did you attempt to make your readers suppose, that in “the covenant of circumcision” the promises were not to *seed*, as of *one*, but to *seeds*, as of *many*; and thence to conclude, that, as the promise, from which the apostle reasons, was not to *seeds* of *many*, but to *seed*, as of *one*, this promise could not be included in that covenant?—Happily for the unlearned, the word of God, in this case, is plain.

Surely, Sir, you must have been strangely forgetful, or else must have presumed very far on the credulity of your readers, when, in your haste to make out your two covenants with Abraham, you hazarded the assertion, that “the promises, in the covenant of circumcision, were to Abraham’s seed,” (obviously meaning his natural seed,) *generally*.” According to your theory, the promise of Canaan for a possession was a very capital part of the covenant. But was this promise, Sir, made to Abraham’s seed *generally*? Was it made to his seed in the lines of Ishmael, and of the sons of Keturah, as well as in the line of Isaac?—and in the line of Esau, as well as in the line of Jacob?—No, Sir; it was only to his seed in the line of Isaac and Jacob, that the land of Canaan was given.

It was thus also, with respect to the other promises of the covenant. They were *not* "to Abraham's seed generally," but were under a special limitation. *For*, says the apostle, *they are not all Israel, who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all CHILDREN*, that is, in the covenant sense; *but THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE*, that is, those who, by faith, are brought within the provision of the promise, ARE COUNTED FOR THE SEED. It appears, then, the promises were *not* "to Abraham's seed generally," even of the line of Isaac and Jacob; for only a part, even of the nation of Israel, were *children of the promise*.

Those only, with respect to whom the conditions of the covenant were fulfilled, and who, consequently, walked in the steps of Abraham's faith, were counted for the *seed*, to whom the promises were made. This is the apostle's representation; and in perfect agreement with this, is the representation of the matter in my "Two Discourses."

The nation of Israel at large, indeed, were, in due time, put into the possession of Canaan, and, as the descendants of Abraham, enjoyed many privileges; but it was because there was a true *seed* among them, and not because they were *all* entitled to the promises. Even the land of Canaan, which was only a type and pledge of the heavenly inheritance of the church, belonged, according to the promise, only to the true seed of Abraham, and was to be holden only by faith. Hence, that evil generation, *whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, could not enter in*, and take possession of the land, *because of unbelief*; and *because of unbelief*, the whole posterity of Abraham have, for many ages, been excluded from it.

So plain, it is, that, although the community of Israel, at large, enjoyed many great and precious privileges, for the sake of the true seed among them, just as the nominal members of the church now do; yet the promises of the covenant were only to the true *seed*.

No, Sir, the apostle did not say, neither did he imply, that, "in the covenant of circumcision, the promises were not to *seed*, as of *one*, but to *seeds*, as of *many*"; nor could he, for the fact was certainly otherwise. Your construction, then, is manifestly incorrect; and involves, I conceive, a very material error.

To Abraham and his SEED were the promises made.

He saith not, And to SEEDS, as of MANY; but as of ONE, And to thy SEED, WHICH IS CHRIST. You and your brethren, generally, if I rightly understand you, construe the ONE, in this passage, as meaning *one individual*, or exclusively Christ in person. This, Sir, I believe to be incorrect; a flagrant violation of the grammatical construction of the text; and directly repugnant, as well to the tenor of the apostle's argument, as to his express declarations.

In the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle says, *For as the body is ONE, and hath many members, and all the members of that ONE body, being many are one BODY; so also is CHRIST: that is, Christ is one body, with many members.* Here by CHRIST, we are certainly to understand, not the Saviour, in his own person, exclusively; but the *Saviour* and his church, collectively, as *one*. Analagous to this, is the plain, grammatical, construction of the text, now in question between us. *He saith not, And to SEEDS as of MANY, that is, many seeds; but as of ONE, that is, of one seed, And to thy SEED which is CHRIST: not the Saviour, exclusively, in person; but the Saviour and his church as one.* For all who are Christ's are Abraham's SEED, and jointly with Christ, are HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE. This is the plain sense of the text; and, in this sense, the text is directly in point, in the chain of the apostle's argument.

In the whole connexion, the apostle is expressly upon the subject of justification by faith. This doctrine he argues, in this place, as also in the fourth of Romans, from the promises of the covenant with Abraham and his seed. And to shew, that, according to these promises, those only, who by faith are *one* in Christ, are to be justified; he observes, that the promises were made, not to *seeds*, as of many, but to *seed*, as of one; not to a *diversity of seeds*, but to that particular *seed*, who, by faith, are *all ONE in Christ Jesus*. In this sense of the text his argument is clear and conclusive. For if the promises were made only to such as by faith are one in Christ; then it is plain, that, according to the promises, it is only by faith, that any can be justified.

But to make the apostle say, that the promises were made to Christ in person, to the exclusion of all others, as well those *who are of faith*, as those who are not; is

it not to make him say what is palpably impertinent, as well as manifestly untrue. According to your construction of the text, his argument would stand thus: The promises were made to *Christ*, as the *one seed* to the exclusion of all others, both believers and unbelievers; therefore, according to the promises, those only who believe can be justified!—"Does the apostle, Sir, reason at this rate?"

But, by your construction of this text, you not only make the apostle reason absurdly; but you make him say that which is untrue: Nay, you make him contradict, directly, his own declarations. For in this very chapter, instead of saying, that Christ in person, exclusively, is the *one seed*; he says, expressly, *If YE be Christ's, then are YE Abraham's SEED, and HEIRS according to the PROMISE*; and in the ninth of Romans, with equal explicitness, he says, *the CHILDREN (not Christ in person merely, but the children) of the PROMISE are counted for the seed*. But will you, Sir, persist, in making the apostle so palpably contradict himself?

I have no difficulty, in admitting, for I believe it to be true, as in my third Letter I have shewn, that "the woman's seed, who was to bruise the serpent's head, was also the seed promised to Abraham, in whom" all nations should be blessed. But I also believe, with the excellent Mr. Scott, and the principal Commentators on the scriptures, that "Christ himself is *preeminently* the seed of the woman," and that "*in Christ all his genuine disciples are included*, as members of his mystical body." And as, by the *seed of the woman* by whom the serpent's head was to be bruised, we are to understand Christ, and all true believers as *one* in him; so by the *seed of Abraham*, in whom all nations were to be blessed we are also to understand Christ and his people in the same collective sense. Accordingly, the apostle says, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for YE are all ONE in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then, are ye Abraham's SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.*

I am fully aware, Sir, that you will reluctantly give up your favorite construction of the "ONE" SEED, which is Christ; for it is a very principal Antipædobaptist fortress; nay, it is your citadel. But are you, Sir, prepared to abide the consequences of holding this construction?

Some of the consequences, I will now take leave to present in one view.

By holding the construction, that by the *one seed*, we are to understand Christ, exclusively, in person, you are led to make the assertion, that "the promises, in the covenant of circumcision, were not to *seed*, as of one, but to *many*, to Abraham's seed generally;" which is directly contrary to the fact. By holding this construction, you not only make the apostle reason most impertinently and absurdly; but what is still more, you make him directly contradict himself. If you still hold, that the promises were made only to Christ in person, then, of consequence, you must hold, that there are no gospel promises to believers: for according to your own just acknowledgment, the promises made to the *one seed*, comprise the whole gospel.—But this is not all.

If you still insist upon your construction, it will be incumbent on you clearly to point out the scriptural distinction between the *one seed*, to whom the promises were made, and the *seed, who are heirs according to the promise, and who are all ONE in Christ Jesus*. According to your hypothesis, *the seed, who are heirs according to the promise*, are not the seed mentioned in the covenant of the Abrahamic church; for in that covenant, you say, "the promises were to Abraham's (natural) seed generally." Neither are they the *seed*, to whom the ancient gospel promises, which you assert were not included in that covenant, were made; for that seed is exclusively Christ in person. I ask, then, Sir, what seed are they? If those, *who are of faith*, are not the *seed*, mentioned in the covenant of the Abrahamic church, nor the seed to whom the promises, which you hold to be independent of that covenant, were made; then, what seed are they, and how are they heirs according to the promise? To this question, Sir, it certainly behoves you to give a clear, and scriptural and satisfactory answer.

According to your hypothesis, there are *many*, at least as many as three, distinct seeds, to whom promises were made; the *many*, "the (natural) *seed* of Abraham generally," mentioned in the covenant, sealed with circumcision; the *one seed*, to whom the promises, which you assert to have been distinct from that covenant, were made; and the *seed, who are heirs according to the promise!*

Now this, Sir, I freely confess, is, in my view, directly repugnant to the scriptural truth. For notwithstanding your assertions to the contrary, I do believe, with the apostle, that *to Abraham and his seed, not to SEEDS as of MANY, but SEED as of ONE*; namely, Christ in person, and all true believers, as one in him, all the promises were made, and solemnly ratified and sealed, with the sign of circumcision. And if so, then your assumed distinction between two supposed covenants, made with Abraham, is totally unscriptural and unfounded.

This, Sir, I have now argued at great length, and have not failed, I trust, very amply to prove. I have proved it from a view of the original gospel promise, on which the church of God, from the beginning was founded; from a connected view of God's covenant transactions with Abraham; from a view of the comprehensive promises, expressly mentioned at the time the covenant with Abraham and his seed was sealed with the sign of circumcision; and by direct New Testament, as well as Old Testament, testimony.

All your attempts, then, to prove, that I had "mistaken the promise in my text," turn out to be utterly abortive; all your charges against me, as having "strangely blended two covenants, which are entirely distinct, are totally unfounded; all your desultory reasonings, conclusions, and assertions, grounded on your assumed distinction, must fall to the ground; and all your airs of exultation, as if you had completely overthrown my doctrine, only serve to shew how much easier, in some instances, it is for men to triumph, than to achieve a victory.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER VIII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my preceding Letters, I have endeavored to evince, and, I trust, have not failed to do it conclusively, that the great and precious promises, from time to time made and renewed to Abraham, were all included in the

gracious and comprehensive covenant, which was solemnly ratified, and sealed with the sign of circumcision. Had it been my object merely to defend my "Two Discourses" against your "Strictures," it might have been sufficient for my purpose barely to have *asserted*, or *assumed*, that there *were not* two distinct covenants, as you have been pleased to *assert*, or *assume* that there *were*. But as this has of late become so material a point in the present controversy, and as it has not, to my knowledge, had much attention bestowed upon it, by any who have written on this general subject; it appeared to me proper, not to content myself with merely opposing assertion to assertion, and assumption to assumption, but to argue to the point at considerable length.

Perhaps I have been too prolix. But if, in the course of my argument, any thing has been done towards rescuing the ancient covenant and church of God from that state of degradation, into which you and your brethren have so zealously endeavored to sink them; and to expose the futility and unscriptural nature of the antipædobaptist objections against them; my labor, I trust, will not be considered as altogether useless.

In my "Two Discourses," my first proposition was, "*That the covenant, which was made with Abraham, and by which the church was formed in his family, was intended to be perpetual, or to continue throughout all generations.*"

This proposition I attempted to prove by arguments drawn from no less than five distinct scriptural topics: Of this, Sir, you were careful not to apprize your readers. Though you cite the proposition, you have so prudently avoided taking any notice of the arguments by which I endeavoured to support it, that from your book no person, I think, could learn what any one of them was, or whether, indeed, I *distinctly* offered a single argument of any kind!—Whether in a public disputant such a procedure be fair, and honourable, I cheerfully leave, Sir, for you and a candid public to determine. At any rate, it was probably a procedure, which saved you much trouble; as when arguments are fair and invincible, it is certainly easier to avoid and pass by them, than fairly to meet and remove them out of the way.

But careful as you have been to avoid a direct encounter with my arguments; yet some things, of a nature hostile to them, are adventurously scattered in different

Let. F

parts of your book. These, in some subsequent Letters, I shall endeavour to collect and arrange, under their proper heads, and in such a manner to reply to them, as if possible, to strengthen the general proof of my doctrine.

But at this stage it may be proper to pause, for the purpose of noting more particularly an important point.

Let it here, then, be *specially noted*, that if all the precious promises, made to Abraham, were included in the comprehensive covenant, by which the church was formed in his family; if, in particular the great GOSPEL PROMISE, *In thee and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, was included in that covenant; then, of necessary consequence, your antipædobaptist theory must eventually fall.

This great promise, it is acknowledged on all hands, comprised the Messiah and all the blessings of his kingdom. It was, in fact, as before observed, the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, as summarily revealed at that important era of the church; as the assurance given in Paradise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, was the first revelation of the SAME GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

But you and your brethren have *assumed*, that this promise was *not* included in the covenant of the Abrahamic church; and upon *this assumption*, your principal arguments and objections against us are founded; nay upon *this assumption*, your whole antepædobaptist theory principally depends for its support.

If the covenant with Abraham and his seed, which was solemnly sealed with the sign of circumcision, did include THE GOSPEL PROMISE; and if, upon THIS PROMISE, the church of God under the Abrahamic dispensation, as from the beginning it had been, was founded; then unquestionably *that covenant* and *that church* were essentially the *same* covenant and church, which commenced with the first believing pair in Paradise, which from that early period have been continued, under different dispensations, to the present time,—and which will be continued to the latest ages. This, Sir, you yourself, throughout your book, and your brethren generally, who have written on the subject, have, in effect, acknowledged.

Suffer me, then, to repeat it; if the covenant with Abraham and his seed did include THE GOSPEL PROMISE; then your whole antipædobaptist theory must eventually fall.

Here, then, I might stop ; for, as I have proved at large, that the gospel promise was included in the one comprehensive covenant with Abraham and his seed ; the great doctrine of my "Two Discourses" must rest on a firm and immoveable foundation.

But as it may be of some use to shew, not only in the general, that your theory has no solid foundation, but also in detail, that your arguments and objections against us are intirely unavailing ; I shall take leave to pursue the subject. And if, in my subsequent Letters, there should be the appearance of repetition, as I am aware there will be ; I hope for indulgence ; as apparent repetitions must necessarily result from attending to the same arguments and objections, presented in different attitudes and shapes ; and especially, as it will be my aim to make things as plain as I can to every understanding.

Your's, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER IX.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

I NOW proceed, as in my last Letter I proposed, to a consideration of those things, in different parts of your book, which more directly militate, with the several arguments, by which the doctrine of my "Two Discourses" was attempted to be proved.

"1. *By the covenant made with Abraham he was constituted the father of all them that believe.*"

This was the first head of argument by which I attempted to prove the perpetuity of the covenant. A single paragraph in the illustration of this argument, you have condescended to notice ; and to notice, too, in such a manner, as induces me to conclude, that this was one of the points, which you intended, according to your honest declaration, "*so to touch as to be felt.*"—The paragraph is the following.

"But Abraham *was* the father of many nations ; and all who are of faith *are* his children, and *are* blessed with

him. This is according to the covenant of promise, which God made with Abraham. *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith*, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED, though they be not his natural posterity, THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED TO THEM ALSO.*

With reference to this passage, you very complacently "charge" me, 1. "With misquoting the apostle's words;" 2. "With misapplying them." and 3. "With making him give a very important conclusion without any premises."* To these charges, Sir, I am prepared to reply.

1. That in quoting Rom. iv. 11, I omitted, in this instance, some words, I readily acknowledge. The text had just before been quoted entire; and I did believe, and do still believe, that the omission, in this contested quotation, did no injury to the sense of the apostle.

The clause, *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised*, obviously contains two distinct ideas; first, that circumcision was given to Abraham, as a seal of the righteousness of faith; and, secondly, that Abraham was the subject of faith, before he was circumcised.

As this last idea, though no wise inauspicious to my argument, was thought to be not material to it; the words containing it were omitted, and only the first idea was distinctly retained. To any censure, which a candid public may think proper to pass on me, for such an omission, I will submissively bow.

However, as upon further consideration, it appears to me, that the last idea will give additional strength to my argument, in my second edition I have given the text entire. This, together with the remarks, which I have already made, and which I have yet to make, upon the text, in these Letters, will be sufficient, I hope, to atone, even with you, for my former omissions.

2. You "charge" me with misapplying the apostles words.

"Circumcision," you say, "was a seal to Abraham of his faith; but it is not said to be such to his posterity, or to any other person upon earth." (True!) "Mr. Worcester has made it a seal of the righteousness of faith generally." This is my misapplication.

* Appendix, p. 273.

By what authority you undertake to say that circumcision was a seal to Abraham of *his faith*, you have not been so good as to inform us ; neither have you been careful to explain to us, what is to be understood by a seal to Abraham of *his faith*.

Are not faith, Sir, and *the* RIGHTEOUSNESS of *faith*, entirely distinct things ? Is not the righteousness of faith, of which the apostle repeatedly speaks, that righteousness, by which believers are graciously justified ? But what is that righteousness which is *imputed* to believers, for their justification ? Is it not the righteousness of Christ, which, by faith, is apprehended, as the only ground of acceptance with God ? *Faith*, then, is one thing ; and *the righteousness of faith* is another.

Be pleased to observe, Sir, the apostle does not say, that circumcision was to Abraham a *seal of his faith* ; but he says, that Abraham *received it, a seal of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith—of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.*

Suffer me, then, to ask ; was not Abraham's faith, essentially, the same with the faith of every true believer ? Was not the RIGHTEOUSNESS of *the faith, which Abraham had*, the very same, which ever has been, and ever will be, *the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the faith* of every true believer. But if *the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith* be the same to all true believers ; then was not the *seal*, which Abraham received, *a seal of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith* generally ? Was it not the same to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to every believing Israelite, that it was to Abraham ?

Where, then, is the ground for your charge against me of misapplying the apostle's words ?

It is, however, of but little consequence, in what manner you treat me ; it is of vastly greater consequence, how you treat the apostle.

The apostle, Sir, expressly says, that circumcision was a *seal*, not of *faith*, but of *the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith* ; you say, it was a *seal of faith*. The apostle says, it was a *seal of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the faith which Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised*, which, undoubtedly, is *the RIGHTEOUSNESS of the faith* of all true believers ; you say, it was only a seal to ABRAHAM of HIS *faith*, as if HIS *faith* was something entirely different from that of all others !

I cannot but think, Sir, that in cases like this, in which you think proper to differ so widely from the apostle, it would not derogate from your dignity, as a public disputant, to offer some proof, other than your bare assertion, in support of your opinion.—Besides, if circumcision were only a seal to *Abraham of his faith*; why was it applied to Isaac and to Jacob, and to the Israelites generally?

Your questions, respecting the “faith of an infant,” and of “a servant bought with money,” I must leave, for the present, between you and the great Author both of faith itself, and of *the seal of the righteousness of faith*. In the propriety and wisdom of HIS institutions, I trust I may safely confide.

3. “In order to render it plain to every capacity, that Mr. Worcester has made the apostle *conclude without premises*, we will again,” you say, “set down his quotation. *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised*. The apostle,” you observe, “is here made to say, that Abraham was circumcised, so that he might be the father of believers that are *uncircumcised*.”

No, Sir; the apostle is made to say, that *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, that he might be the father of all them that believe, THOUGH they be not circumcised*; that is, whether they be circumcised, or not. Is he, then, made to say any thing, Sir, which he does not say?

But in your usual manner you are pleased to proceed: “We ask, *in the name of common sense*, why it was necessary for Abraham to be circumcised, in order to constitute him, the father of believers that are uncircumcised?”

In my turn, I take leave to ask you, Sir, with great seriousness; would it not be perfectly in character for a deist to ask, *in the name of common sense*, “why it was necessary,” that Adam should abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in order to constitute him the head of a holy race?—“Why it was necessary for Abraham to be circumcised, in order to constitute him the father of them that believe?”—“Why it was necessary” for Aaron to be washed, and anointed with the holy anointing oil, in order to constitute him the

high-priest of the church?—and questions of this sort without number?

Nothing is farther from my heart, than to cast upon you any unfavorable imputation. But really, Sir, I earnestly wish you to consider, whether you, and your brethren, when contending with us, with respect to the ancient institutions of God, do not often adventure upon deistical ground, and insensibly display a spirit, but little becoming the believers in revelation.

The point here in dispute is precisely this; whether it were Abraham's *faith*, which constituted him the father of them that believe; or whether he were thus constituted, by the *special ordination of God*, when he received the sacred seal of circumcision. You hold the former position; I hold the latter.

"In order to see the force of the apostle's reasoning, the following words," you say, "which begins the quotation, ought to be considered as a parenthesis, as they really are, viz. (*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had, yet being uncircumcised.*) The apostle," you add, "states his argument thus: *For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it, then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision, (and he received the sign, &c.) that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised.*" p. 276.

To me Sir, I confess, it would have been some satisfaction to have been informed, by what authority you dispense with *periods*, and insert *parentheses*, at your pleasure, in the sacred text; for notwithstanding the assurance, with which you do it, I cannot but consider it to be using a liberty of at least a very questionable nature. In this way, undoubtedly, the scriptures might be so wrested, as apparently to lend support to any favorite sentiment, which we might choose to adapt.—Your reference to Gal. iii. 13, 14, is totally irrelevant.

In order to make out your charge against me, of having "made the apostle *conclude without premises*," and to support your favorite sentiment; you so manage the text, as entirely to alter the connection, and in a manner to suppress the "premises," from which he does "conclude." Was it, Sir, to have been expected, that, at the very moment when you were "charging" me with "mutilating"

this text, you would yourself have used, with respect to it, so extraordinary a licence.

Will you suffer me, Sir, in your own words to ask, "is it possible that the apostle should reason at this rate." Does he say that it was by "faith being reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, when he was uncircumcised," that he was constituted the father of believers? "He certainly does not."

Was not Abel, Sir, a true believer? Was not Enoch a true believer? Was not Noah a true believer? And was not *faith reckoned* to each of them *for righteousness*, in the same sense that it was to Abraham, while *in uncircumcision*? But was either of them constituted, in the same sense that Abraham was, *the father of them that believe*?—This will not be pretended.

No, Sir, it was not by Abraham's "faith reckoned to him for righteousness, while uncircumcised;" but it was by the special ordination of God, when, for this purpose, *he received the sign of circumcision*, that he was constituted the father of believers.

Before the call of Abraham, as I have before had occasion to observe, the church of God had only been in the family state, without any explicit administration, or special seal of the gracious covenant. The patriarch of a family, was also the patriarch of that part or branch of the church, which the members of his family composed. But for wise and important purposes the Lord saw fit to reduce his church to a more regularly organized body; favored with a clearer dispensation of his covenant, and distinguished by a special and visible seal. Accordingly Abraham, whom infinite wisdom had selected for this purpose, was called away from his country and his kindred, that in his family the church might be regularly formed; and that in him, *as the heir of the world*, and the appointed *father* of the whole body of believers, to the end of time, *all the families of the earth might be blessed*.

After due trial and preparation for the high transaction, *the Lord appeared to Abraham*, with ineffable glory, solemnly to *establish his covenant with him and his seed forever*. By the sacred rite of *circumcision*, a seal of the **RIGHTeousNESS of faith**, and, therefore, a seal of all the blessings of eternal redemption, Abraham was formally constituted the *father* of believers of all nations throughout all

succeeding ages ; *that righteousness*, the same **RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith**, by which he was justified, *might also be imputed to them.*

This account of the matter, I conceive to be perfectly scriptural. It is agreeable to the scriptural view, given of the general subject in my "Two Discourses," and in the preceding Letters ; it is agreeable to the plain tenor of the apostle's argument in the fourth of Romans now particularly in question ; and nothing which you have offered in any part of your book can avail to set it aside.

My first argument, then, still remains unshaken ; and it is, of itself, sufficient, as I conceive, conclusively to prove the *perpetuity of the covenant.*

Standing, Sir, upon this strong ground, your promise of "retracting your charges," I will not call upon you to fulfil ; your numerous implications of censure and reproach I will neither retort nor answer ; your airs and expressions of triumph I will not adopt ; but I will cheerfully resign myself to the judgment of a candid christian public, and leave my cause with the God of truth:

I remain, Sir, &c.



LETTER X.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

THE next head of argument by which, in my "Two Discourses," I attempted to prove the perpetuity of the covenant, was as follows :

"2. God's covenant of promise, made with Abraham, comprised all the blessings and privileges, ever promised to belivers and to the church."

Had you succeeded, Sir, in your attempt to shew, that the great **GOSPEL PROMISE**, first made to Abraham at the time of his call, was not included in the covenant of the present church, this argument would have been impaired. But by the proof which I have offered, that *this promise* was contained in the covenant, this argument is established, I believe, upon a firmly consolidated basis. Even you yourself acknowledge, that "*this promise*

Let. G

comprises every thing, because it comprises the Messiah, the SEED in whom some of all nations shall be blessed." p. 173.

In the second Section of your Appendix, I notice a passage, on which it may be of use to bestow some attention; and for which I may not perhaps find a more proper place than this. I refer to the passage, in which you undertake to enumerate and distinguish the several articles of the covenant. Taking the articles as you have given them, I will offer a counterpart, to your explanation, and submit it for consideration.

"Art. I. *I will make my covenant between me and thee, AND WILL MULTIPLY THEE EXCEEDINGLY, Gen. xvii. 2.*"

That the *spiritual*, as well as *natural*, seed of Abraham will ultimately be as the stars of heaven for multitude, we have the highest certainty: For this is one of the promises expressly mentioned, when, on occasion of the oblation of Isaac, the Lord confirmed his covenant with the awful solemnity of an oath; and *this very promise* is particularly quoted by the Apostle, in the sixth of Hebrews, as a promise, which especially looked forward to gospel times, and the *confirmation* of which, by an OATH, was intended to afford *strong consolation to all, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.*

Yet you are pleased, Sir, to assert that "the promissory part of this article respected the *natural* offspring of Abraham, and *nothing more.*"

"Art. II. *Behold my covenant is with thee, AND THOU SHALT BE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS, ver. 5*"

"This part of the covenant" is certainly to be taken in a *spiritual* as well as *natural* sense: For, as I have before shewn at large, the apostle, in the fourth of Romans, expressly applies it "to the church of Christ,"—to Abrahams *spiritual seed*, even all the nations of the REDEEMED.

But, unhappily, in this instance again, the authority of the apostle appears to have with you but little weight; for you undertake to say, that "there is nothing in this article, which points us directly to the church of Christ."

"Art. III. AND KINGS SHALL COME OF THEE, ver. 6."

If this promise had a literal respect to the "*natural* offspring of the patriarch," it had also, unquestionably, a typical respect to his *spiritual seed*: For as, in the nineteenth of Exodus, God promised Israel, that they should

be unto him a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, and a holy nation; so in the new testament, those who by faith, are children of Abraham, and heirs according to promise, are called a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, an holy nation, and are said to be made KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD.

But "this" promise, you say, respected not the church of God, as such, under any dispensation."

"Art. IV. *I will establish my covenant between me, and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE, AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE. AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE, THE LAND WHEREIN THOU ART A STRANGER, ALL THE LAND OF CANAAN FOR AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, ver. 7, 8.*"

In the preceding "Articles," the divinely constituted heir of the world, and father of many nations, was promised a numerous and excellent seed; a seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore, in number, and as KINGS AND PRIESTS unto God, in dignity and glory. In this fourth Article, to the favoured patriarch and his seed, THE ALL-SUFFICIENT JEHOVAH engages to be a GOD! This is undoubtedly the comprehension of all blessings.

I will be THEIR GOD, and they shall be my people, is the sum of what is promised, in the renewal of the covenant under the present dispensation.

But as an appendage, or part, of Gods gracious covenant, the land of Canaan was annexed; for *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and that which is to come.*

By a special divine grant, the land of Canaan was given to Abraham and his seed. It was given, as a temporal inheritance, to a part of his seed; it was given, for important purposes, to the church at large, and the benefits of the grant are still enjoyed, by believers of all nations, and will be enjoyed in all succeeding ages; and it was given as a sure pledge and earnest of that glorious inheritance, *which is incorruptable, which is undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.**

* It is particularly observable, that not only the land of Canaan before been promised, but the grant had been formally ratified and confirmed, in the ancient manner of contracts between man and man, by passing between the parts of animals, slain for that purpose. This grant, therefore, instead of being a principal part

The capital promise, in this fourth Article, Sir, notwithstanding you were pleased to connect with it the promise of Canaan, evidently appears to have embarrassed you exceedingly; and you seem to have perceived no other way of relief, than adroitly to turn the attention of your readers, from your own embarrassment, to the difficulties, in which you attempt to involve others. Your mazy "questions" and "consequences," following, in this connexion, may have some attention in another place. But I will here, Sir, freely acknowledge, and I would make the acknowledgement with seriousness and gratitude, that after all your attempts to darken and diminish a subject, as clear as it is glorious, and to cast reproach upon the believers in this everlasting covenant; I am "one" of those, who believe that the great promise, now in view, contains "every thing, that a God of mercy can bestow upon fallen creatures for time and for eternity!"

Will you now, dear Sir, *as a professed child of Abraham, by faith in Christ Jesus*, seriously compare the account here given of the covenant, with your own, with which it is placed in contrast; then compare both the one and the other with the scriptures in their connexion; and then say, which is the more correct, which the more scriptural, which the more spiritual and solid, and which the more worthy of the ALL SUFFICIENT GOD.

In your account of this gracious covenant, have you not contented yourself with the mere outward integument or shell, while the more precious and excellent part, you have entirely thrown away?—You have made it throughout a temporal affair; and all the great and inestimable blessings, which in the Messiah it contained for his church and people, in a better life and world, you have labored abundantly to keep out of sight.

In the same *temporal* light, the carnal part of the Jewish nation and church appear to have considered the precious promises of the covenant. But was it thus with the true *heirs of the promises*? No, Sir; but they *confessed, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and they desired a BETTER COUNTRY, that is, an HEAVENLY. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called THEIR GOD; for he hath prepared for them a CITY.*

I am, dear Sir, &c.

of the covenant, of which circumcision was a seal, was evidently no more than a mere appendage, or codicil.

LETTER XI.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

MY next head of argument was expressed in the following terms :

“ 3. The covenant, made with Abraham *and his seed*, is the covenant of which, in the new testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator, and which is designated as the covenant to be established with the church, in the days of the gospel.

With respect to this argument there is one paragraph in your “*Strictures*,” which requires some attention.

“ But after all his ingenious labor to prove his point,” you are pleased to say, “ he has failed ;” (Of this, Sir, the public will judge,) “ and in the very next page, with much seeming reluctance conceded to an important difference, between the covenant with Abraham and his seed, and the covenant with the church under the present dispensation.” No, Sir, I have conceded to no difference. But you proceed: “ Speaking of the new covenant, he says, ‘ In the last instance, there is *an intimation of a renewal of heart*, in those with whom the covenant is established.’ *An intimation*, Sir,” you exclaim ; is this all? Is there not a positive solemn engagement? *—An intimation of a renewal of heart ! We could not have believed, had we not seen it from his own pen, that the pastor of The Tabernacle Church in Salem, could ever have spoken with such cold indifference of the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the heart !” P. 287.

In reply to this extraordinary paragraph, I take leave to present, at large, the passage of my Discourses, to which you here refer.

“ In the last instance indeed,” that is, of the statement

* *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.*—This I call “an intimation of a RENEWAL OF HEART.” But perhaps I do not rightly understand the meaning of the word !

I say, also, that “a renewal of heart” was *intimated*, by the ancient *sign of circumcision* ; the covenant import of which is thus expressed ; *The Lord thy God will circumcise THINE HEART, and the HEART of THY SEED to LOVE the LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THINE HEART AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, THAT THOU MAYEST LIVE.*—What “intimation,” or “engagement,” is there in the one case, different from what there is in the other ?

of the covenant," there is an intimation of a renewal of heart, in those, with whom the covenant is established. The same also was intimated, at the first establishment of the covenant with Abraham and his seed, by the sign of circumcision, which was a seal of the *RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith*, and a sacrament significant of a renovation of heart, or a new creature. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the *RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith*. Accordingly in the Old Testament, a renovation of heart, or inward conformity to the law of God, is abundantly inculcated; and the promise of the Spirit to God's covenant people for, *this purpose*, is often repeated. And in the New Testament, we are taught that *the promise of the Spirit* was included in the covenant with Abraham, or in that blessing of Abraham, which comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ."

The public, Sir, will now judge of the "cold indifference, with which the Pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, in renewing the heart; and the candour and fairness, with which the Pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Boston writes his Strictures!—I forbear to make any comment; and merely remark, that this is not the only instance, in which you have thought proper to treat me in this, or a similar manner.

My *third argument* however, still remains unimpaired, and by what I have offered in the preceding Letters is more firmly established.—Those parts of your book, which more directly militate with my *fourth* head of argument, I reserve for subsequent consideration.

"5. The covenant, made with Abraham, is expressly declared to be an everlasting, or perpetual, covenant; a covenant to continue to the latest generations."

In your "Strictures" on my Discourses, you have nothing, as I recollect, directly touching this *fifth argument*; but in the second Section of your Appendix, you have a note, which ought not to pass without some attention.

"The word *everlasting*," you say, "has a threefold application, as connected with this covenant. The first is general. It is called an *everlasting* covenant. The possession of the promised land, an *everlasting* possession. The mark, left upon the subjects of this bloody rite is thus expressed; My covenant shall be *in your flesh* for

an everlasting covenant. Our brethren very tenaciously retain the first of these, but have no difficulty in dispensing with the two last. To us they appear so entirely connected, that we are led to consider them all of the same import. Yea, it appears to us that the two latter are exegetical of the former. *At least, no part of the covenant can, by fair construction, be carried to a greater extent of time, than the mark of circumcision in the flesh, and the possession of the land of Canaan, both of which are said to be everlasting.*" P. 174.

This note, if it means any thing, undoubtedly means, that the whole covenant with Abraham and his seed, if not merely *temporal*, as opposed to *spiritual*, was at least *temporary*, as opposed to *eternal*: for whether any spiritual blessings were contained in it, or not, "no part of the covenant can by fair construction," you say, "be carried to a greater extent of time, than the mark of circumcision in the flesh, and the possession of the land of Canaan." But both "the mark of circumcision in the flesh," and "the possession of Canaan," you considered, most evidently, as of *temporary duration*. In a word, you obviously mean, that the whole covenant with Abraham and his seed, has long since been abrogated, or ceased to be in force.

That part of the covenant, then, by which Abraham was made *the heir of the world, and the father of believers of all nations, that righteousness might also be imputed to them and thus all nations be blessed in him*, has long since been abrogated!—That part of the covenant, which contained the promise of a numerous and excellent seed, *a seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore, in number, and as kings and priests unto God, in dignity and glory*; which was expressly confirmed by the solemn oath of Jehovah; and which is particularly noted by the apostle as a source of strong consolation to those, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*; has long since been abrogated!—And that part of the covenant, in which the ALL SUFFICIENT GOD, engaged to be a *God to Abraham and to his seed, throughout all generations*, has long since been abrogated!—Alas! Sir, and what is to become of you and me?—What is to become of the church at large?—What is to become of all the nations of the earth?

What is to become of us, if that gracious covenant, in

which provision was made for the *imputation of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith* to believers of all nations, and from which the apostle to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews, expressly argues the doctrine of justification, is no longer in force? What is to become of the church at large, if God has ceased to be a God to Abraham and his seed? What is to become of the world, if that covenant, which proved that in Abraham and his seed, all nations should be blessed, is utterly annulled!—And what, Sir, *has become of the ancient heirs of the promises, who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth?*—If “no part of the covenant can be carried to a greater extent of time, than the mark of circumcision in the flesh;” how vain, alas! were their raised hopes of an eternal inheritance!

The “mark of circumcision,” Sir, is not said to be an everlasting “*mark*,” but the “*mark*,” if we must use the word, of an “*everlasting covenant*.” There is nothing, therefore in what is said of circumcision, which warrants the assertion, that “no part of the covenant can be carried to a greater extent of time, than this mark in the flesh.” And as for the possession of Canaan, I believe it to be, in its highest covenant sense, *an everlasting possession*, AN ETERNAL INHERITANCE.

Notwithstanding all, which you have thought proper to say to the contrary, I yet firmly believe that God is still, and will forever be, the covenant God of Abraham, his seed, and that *he hath prepared for them a city*. And instead, Sir, of your having “destroyed the Abrahamic covenant,” as by one of your friends it was exultingly said you had done, I desire to bless God, and in this I am confident of the grateful concurrence of millions of the patriarch’s seed, that the gracious and holy covenant is not yet “destroyed,” nor ever can be “destroyed.” *For, says Jehovah, the God of Abraham, the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, NEITHER SHALL THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED.*

Your’s, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER XII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

AS the covenant made with Abraham and his seed was the constitution of the church, formed in his family; the covenant and church were undoubtedly intended to be commensurate in their duration. If the covenant were intended to be *temporary*, the church was to be *temporary*; but if the covenant were intended to be perpetual, the church was also to be perpetual.

In my Discourses, therefore, I considered the perpetuity of the covenant, and the perpetuity of the church, as implying each other; and accordingly in my series of proof that the covenant was intended to be perpetual, my *fourth* head of argument was, that “*The church, under the gospel, is uniformly, in the scriptures, represented, as being the same church, or a continuation of the same church, which was formed in the family of Abraham.*”

In your Strictures, you have said nothing, as I recollect, directly to this point; but in the third Section of your Appendix, without any regard to the arguments exhibited to prove that the *post-Christian* church is only a continuation under a new dispensation, of the *pre-Christian*,* you attempt to prove that it is *not*.

In your introductory remarks relative to this subject, you have several implications, of no very respectful nature, to be sure, respecting the covenant and church of God, under the ancient dispensation; and are pleased broadly to insinuate, that those, who hold to their cou-

* By nothing almost are people more commonly misled than by names. Because the covenant with Abraham and his seed, is sometimes called “*the covenant of circumcision*,” some are ready to conclude, that circumcision constituted the very essence of the covenant; whereas it was only a *token*, or *seal*. So, also because the ancient church is sometimes called the *Jewish* church, some, (and I perceive, Sir, that you are of the number,) from this simple circumstance, are led to infer, that the present church is not a continuation of the ancient. I choose, therefore, to use such names as I consider the most proper, and the least likely to mislead. For using the name *pre-Christian* to designate the church under the ancient dispensation, and *post-Christian* to designate the same church under the present dispensation, I have the authority of the learned and excellent FABER.—The ancient church of God is no where in scripture called the *Jewish* church.—A minute remark indeed; but not,—perhaps, unnecessary!

tinuance, under the present dispensation, are guilty of acting the same part, with "those Judaizing teachers, whom St. Paul, in his epistles to the Galatians, Philipians, and others, so severely reprehended." To these, and numerous other implications of a similar nature, with which your book abounds, I am not at present concerned to reply. If, on sober reflection, they afford you any pleasure, I can assure you, Sir, I envy you not the enjoyment.

But careful, though you have been, to keep *our proofs* out of sight; while I pass by your impassioned appeals to the feelings and prejudices of your readers; your *arguments*, in this Section, I shall endeavor directly to meet and answer.

1. "The two churches," you say, meaning the pre-Christian, and post-Christian, *differ essentially in their constitutions*.

"By the constitution of the Jewish church, we may understand those primary laws, by which they were united and distinguished as one ecclesiastical body. These laws contain a declaration of the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations of all the members; and also the qualifications, which constitute the right of membership. *Circumcision*," you add, "*holds the first and most important place in this system!*" p. 192.

If you really suppose, Sir, that "circumcision held the *first and most important place*" in "the constitution, and among "the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations," of the ancient church of God, we must cease to wonder that you allow yourself to speak of the "church" and its "constitution" with so little respect. But that such an opinion should be held, by any serious believer in the scriptures, an opinion, so repugnant to truth, and so derogatory to the character of the *all-sufficient God*, who gave "the constitution," and owned "the church" as his *peculiar treasure*,—cannot fail to strike the reflecting and pious mind with astonishment.

Is an external rite, then, to be considered as holding "the first and most important place in the constitution of an ecclesiastical body?" Is an external sign of more importance than the thing signified?—Is a seal of more importance than the thing sealed?—Is the *token* of a covenant of greater importance than the covenant itself? Was it of greater importance for Abraham and his seed

to be circumcised, than to *walk before God and be perfect*? Was circumcision of greater importance to them, than that *RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith*, of which it was an instituted seal?—A moment's attention to the subject, must be sufficient for the conviction of every candid mind.

Circumcision, under the *ancient* dispensation held no higher, or more important, "place," than *baptism* holds, under the *present*. But, my dear Sir, if you consider baptism as holding "the first and most important place," in the present constitution of the church; we must certainly be excused, if we continue to think, that "you lay upon this ordinance an undue stress."

But I ask, Sir, what was "the constitution" of the pre-Christian church? Was it not the covenant, by which the church was formed? Was it not in the covenant, that "the rights, and privileges, the duties and obligations of the members" were declared? Unquestionably it was.

I ask, then, again, what were "the duties and obligations of the members," as expressed in the covenant?—Were they not comprised in the comprehensive injunction, *Walk before me, and be perfect*?—And what were "the rights and privileges," to which the true members of the church were by covenant entitled? Did they not consist in having the *ALL SUFFICIENT JEHOVAH* for *THEIR GOD*, and in holding a part in all the immunities and blessings of his people?

In what respect, then, did "the constitution" of the church under the ancient dispensation "differ" from the present? Obviously, Sir, in no essential respect. In regard to external rites and appendages, indeed, a difference is manifest; but external rites and appendages are neither the church itself, nor "the constitution" of the church.

"The *constitution* of the church" is the *covenant* of the church; and it has been proved, I trust, conclusively, that, however different the external rites and appendages may be, under the present dispensation, from what they were under the ancient, the *covenant*, nevertheless, is still *the same*. As the ancient members of the church were required to *walk before God and be perfect*, so are the present. And as the true members of the church, anciently, had the *all sufficient Jehovah* for *their God*, and held a part in all the immunities and blessings of

his people ; the same, also, to this day, are the peculiar “privileges and rights of the true members of the church.”

But “the qualifications for membership” were not, you contend, the same anciently, as at present. For “to constitute a person a *complete member* of the Jewish church,” you say, “required nothing more than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised.” P. 194.

This, Sir, is an assertion, which, I believe, can never be proved. If by a *complete member*, you mean a *true member*, or one entitled to all the privileges and blessings, promised in the covenant of the church ; does not your assertion go directly in the face of both the Old Testament and New ?

At the formal establishment of the church in Abraham’s family, the express requirement was, WALK BEFORE ME, AND BE PERFECT. On the renewal of the covenant at Sinai, when the law was added, *Moses took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people ; and they said, ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SAID WILL WE DO, AND BE OBEDIENT.** When the covenant was renewed, just before the passage over Jordan, to take possession of the promised land, *Moses said to the people, This day the Lord hath commanded you to do these statutes and judgments. Thou shalt, therefore, keep and do them, WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL. THOU HAST AVOUCHED THE LORD, this day TO BE THY GOD, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and to hearken to his voice. And the LORD HATH AVOUCHED THEE, this day, TO BE HIS PEOPLE, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep his commandments.†*

Was there nothing, Sir, in all this, “more than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised ?” I ask you, Sir, seriously, what more is now required, in order to complete, or true, membership in the church of God, than was anciently required and professed ?

Suffer me to ask further ; what did the apostle mean, when to the Romans, he said, *They are not all Israel, who are of Israel?* Did he mean, that they were not all “bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish pa-

* Exod. xxiv. 7.

† Deut. xxvi. 16—19.

rents, and circumcised? What, then, did he mean, when he said, *He is not a Jew, which is one OUTWARDLY, neither is that circumcision which is OUTWARD IN THE FLESH; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and CIRCUMCISION is that of the HEART, in the spirit, and not in the letter, WHOSE PRAISE IS NOT OF MEN, BUT OF GOD!*

I ask once more; why was it that God so often and solemnly, complained of his ancient church for their breach of covenant? Was it because they were not "bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and circumcised?" Was it for this cause, that they were so often, and so signally chastised? And was it for this, that the greater part of them were at length broken off from the olive tree, and made examples, and monuments, of God's peculiar displeasure? No, Sir; it was on an account very different from this: it was *because of UNBELIEF.*

But perhaps by "a *complete* member," you did not mean a *true* member, but only a person visibly entitled to all the external rights and privileges of the church. But even in this sense, it has never been proved, neither do I believe it to be true, that "to constitute a person a complete member of the Jewish church, required nothing more, than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised."

Circumcised children were members of the church, I believe, only in a sense, *analogous* to that, in which children, whose names are enrolled in the public records as born in this commonwealth, are members of this civil community.*

By virtue of their relation to their parents, children of the civil community enjoy many privileges, and are placed under many advantages; and the government stands engaged, conditionally, for their recognition, their protection, and welfare. But though, in a sense, members of the community, they are not however, *complete* members; that is, they are not invested with all the rights and privileges of citizens, until further qualified according to established regulations.

Analogous to this, was the case with circumcised children, under the former dispensation, as it is also with baptized children under the present. Though, in a

* For the sake of illustration, *spiritual* things may be compared with *secular*, without any derogation.

sense, members of the church, yet they were not *complete* members ; that is, were not invested with all the rights and privileges, appertaining to the church ; until further qualified according to the prescribed forms.

Different as the forms might be, there was, nevertheless, a public profession, a public and formal consent to the covenant, necessary to *complete* membership, under the former dispensation as under the present. Accordingly, in the 31st of Deuteronomy, we have on record a standing order of the church to this effect.

In the fortieth year, after their departure from Egypt, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, the tribes of Israel were assembled on the plains of Moab, for a solemn renewal of covenant. On this interesting occasion, after a particular and impressive rehearsal, Moses said unto them : Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel ; your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water, THAT THOU SHOULDEST ENTER INTO COVENANT WITH THE LORD THY GOD, AND INTO HIS OATH, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day : That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to ABRAHAM, TO ISAAC, AND TO JACOB.—Deut. xxix. 9—13.

And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place, which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law : And THEIR CHILDREN WHICH HAVE NOT KNOWN, MAY HEAR

AND LEARN TO FEAR THE LORD YOUR GOD, *as long as ye live in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.*

Thus in every seventh, or sabbatical year, a year especially appropriated to religious purposes, there was ordered to be a public and solemn renewal of covenant with God, such as was attended on the plains of Moab. And it is particularly observable, that this order had a special reference to the young, that those of them, who had come to years of understanding, might have opportunity to learn their obligations, and personally to consent to the covenant.

In this public profession, in thus personally and solemnly consenting to the covenant, they severally engaged *to walk after the Lord with all the heart, and with all the soul*; as appears from the tenor of the covenant itself, and also from an account of one of these solemnities, given in 2d Kings xxiii. 2, 3, which you will consult at your leisure.

But was there in all this, Sir, "nothing more than being bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and circumcised."

On the whole, is not all, which you have said, so much to the disparagement of the ancient Zion of the Holy One of Israel, respecting the constitution of the church, and the qualifications for membership, under the ancient dispensation, not only destitute of scriptural support, but directly contrary to plain scripture testimony. Is there not proof, "as strong as proof of holy writ" can be, that "circumcision" did *not* hold the first and most important place in the constitution of the pre-Christian church. And that it is not true, that "to constitute a person a complete member of the church required nothing more than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised?"

What more does God now require, in order to complete membership in his church, than he anciently required? And what more does he promise now, to those, who are true to his covenant, than what he anciently promised? But if the requirements are for substance the same, and the promises the same; or, in other words, if the covenant, or "constitution," be essentially the same, notwithstanding any difference in the outward rites and forms; is it not then clear, that the church, though under a different dispensation, is nevertheless

the same ZION, which God anciently promised to *make an ETERNAL EXCELLENCY, AND THE JOY OF MANY GENERATIONS?*

Your other arguments, I will consider in their order.
Your's, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER XIII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

THREE of the arguments, by which you attempted to prove, that the *post-Christian* church is not a continuation of the *pre-Christian*, remain yet to be considered.

"2. *Our second argument, you say, is taken from the actual difference in the visible form of the two churches. The Jewish church, in every stage of it, has been national. The gospel church is selected and particular.*" P. 195.

The fact is simply this: For two thousand years, from the beginning to the call of Abraham, the church of God, built upon the first GOSPEL PROMISE, was continued in the domestic, or family, state. In the days of Abraham a new dispensation commenced. From that era, for about two thousand years more, the Lord was pleased so to order it in his *special* providence, that, his church, still resting on the same GOSPEL PROMISE, but more clearly revealed, should dwell compactly together: And being in that situation, they were necessarily associated, in a *civil* as well as ecclesiastical capacity.

Their *civil* state, however, was *one* thing, and their *ecclesiastical* state was *distinctly* another.

But after the Messiah had come, *a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel*, the great purposes of the former economy being accomplished, and *the middle wall*, between Jew and Gentile, broken down; the church, resting still upon the same GOSPEL, now unfolded with meridian splendour, was extended to different and distant nations, and has since continued to be spread abroad over the face of the globe; that the ancient promise, that *in Abraham and his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*, might be eventually fulfilled:

But what does all this prove? Does it prove, that the *present* is not the *ancient* church continued? N^o, Sir; but it proves, that the great design of God is *one*, that the work of redemption is one, that the church of the redeemed is *ONE*; but advanced from stage to stage, under successive dispensations, as best answers the Mind of infinite wisdom and grace.

But the "gospel church," you say, "is composed of none but professing believers."

In the same sense, Sir, that this is true with respect to the *post-Christian* church, it is also true, with respect to the *pre-Christian*. This, in answer to your first argument, I have shewn at large. And difficult as it may be to reconcile the concession with the general tenor of your book; yet you yourself have explicitly conceded, that "*the Jews, as a nation, PROFESSED to be his (Christ's) people.*" P. 240 & 242.

If therefore, "it cannot be proved, nor fairly inferred, from any thing recorded in the New Testament, that ever a single person, was considered as a member of the *post-Christian* church, who did not profess faith in Jesus Christ;" so neither can it "be proved nor fairly inferred," from any part of the scriptures, that ever a single person was considered a "complete" member of the *pre-Christian* church, who did not profess faith in the same glorious Messiah.

In your *second* argument, then, there is nothing of the least avail to prove, that the present church is not the ancient church continued; and all, which you have thought proper to advance with reference to it, I may fairly, I think, consider as either totally unfounded, or totally irrelevant.

3. "That the Jewish and Christian churches are not the same, may be argued," you say, "from several passages of scripture, which represent the gospel church, as commencing at a different period from the ancient church."

Your principal passage, and that indeed, on which all the rest depend, is the following. *In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.**—"We know of no christian expositor," you say, "who does

* Dan. ii. 44.

not consider this as a prediction of the gospel church. But if this church had been set up more than thirteen hundred years before, why should Daniel speak of it as an event still future?"

That God had a spiritual "kingdom" in the world, a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*, long before the coming of the Messiah, you will not, I believe, Sir, undertake to deny. The excellent Dr. Fuller, as quoted by yourself, speaking of the natural seed of Abraham, says—"It was among them that God set up *his spiritual kingdom*, giving them his lively oracles, sending to them his prophets, and establishing among them his holy worship; *which great advantages were, for many ages, in a manner confined to them.*"

It was not, then, the commencement of the "kingdom," or church of God, strictly considered, but the commencement of a new *dispensation*, to which this prophecy referred; and "no christian expositor," so far as I know, has ever considered it in a different light. Nay, Sir, strange as it may seem, even you yourself in this connexion, adopt this same explanation. "Conformably to this sentiment," you say, "we find our blessed Lord, often speaking of the *gospel dispensation*, under the *metaphor* of a kingdom."

In this, then, we are agreed, that the prophecy, now in question, referred to the *gospel dispensation*; and I agree with you further, that in the days of Daniel the gospel dispensation was future!—But what is this to your point?

Because the *gospel dispensation*, which by way of distinction was called the "kingdom of heaven," had not taken place in the days of Daniel, but was then "future;" does it thence follow, that the church of God, under this *dispensation*, is not a continuation of the ancient Zion? Is this, Sir, argument? is this scriptural proof?

Your other texts, brought under this head, I take leave to set down together, that they may strike the mind, with their united force. *Therefore, I say unto you, that the kingdom of God, shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*—Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the*

* Mat. xxi. 43. † Ibid. 31, 32.

publicans and the HARLOTS believed him.† *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Jesus answered, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.†

These are solemn texts, and deserve the most serious consideration. But really, Sir, to discern in them any thing like proof, that the church under the present dispensation is not the ancient church continued, must require a peculiar kind of sight, of which I frankly confess myself destitute.

Doubtless no christian believes, that false professors and hypocrites, such as were the scribes and pharisees, are fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven. But is it not a melancholy fact, that many such there are, even in the visible "gospel church!"

"It would be an insult," you say, "upon the understanding of men to attempt to maintain the two opposite points, that new born infants must be admitted to membership in the christian church, and that the church was nevertheless not of this world, but a spiritual body. *A man, who could believe this, would have but little difficulty in believing transubstantiation, or any other absurdity!*" This, Sir, I quote as a sample of your spirit and manner under this argument.

But do I mistake, or is it in fact true, that the same DIVINE PERSON, who said, *My kingdom is not of this world*; also said, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me*, FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!—Whether, in your haste, you have not virtually charged the gracious IMMANUEL with being a "man, who could find but little difficulty in believing transubstantiation, or any other absurdity," I most certainly will not undertake to say! I submit it for you to consider.

In what sense children are to be considered members of the church, I have before endeavored to explain.

"No man," you are pleased to say, "who examines with candor the history of the Jewish church from the days of Abraham, till the destruction of their nation and temple by Vespasian, but what must conclude, that the true believers, at any period, would have been, when compared with the whole nation, *only a small minority, or remnant according to the election of grace.*" P. 202.

* Mat. v. 20. † John xviii. 36.

And what, Sir, if the same would hold true, with respect to the visible christian church at large, from the days of Christ to the present? Certainly it would be a subject for deep lamentation. But would it prove that God does not require all the members of his church, under the present dispensation, as he certainly did under the ancient, to walk before him and be perfect? No, Sir; not in the least.

Hitherto, then, we have found in your arguments, (for so we must call them,) nothing of the least avail to your point. Your fourth and last argument I reserve for another Letter. I am, Sir, &c.



LETTER XIV.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

“Our *fourth* and last argument, to prove, that the gospel church is totally distinct from, and independent of, the Jewish, shall be drawn,” you say, “from facts, recorded in the New-Testament. P. 204.

If it would not have the appearance of burlesque, and would my limits permit, I should be strongly inclined to transcribe the whole, which you have thought proper to offer under this head, as a sample of your spirit and manner of reasoning.

“Christian reader, if your Bible be at hand, turn to the third chapter of Matthew, and read and examine carefully.” Such is the manner in which our attention is summoned.

And what, Sir, shall we find in the third chapter of Matthew? Why, truly, that *John preached in the wilderness of Judea*; and that *Jesus was baptized of John at Jordan*. These are the simple facts, to which you are pleased to call our attention, as proof that the church, under the present dispensation, “is totally distinct from, and independent of,” the ancient church! “Stubborn facts” indeed!

But “did John,” you ask, “derive his authority to preach and baptize from the Jewish church?” And in my turn, Sir, I ask; did Elijah, in whose *spirit and power John*

was sent, "derive his authority to preach," and anoint prophets and kings, "from the Jewish church?"

You "ask again, did John preach the same doctrine, which the leaders of this church did?"—And again, Sir, I ask; did Elijah, did Isaiah, did any of the ancient prophets of the Lord, "preach the same doctrine," which the ancient false prophets, too often "the leaders of the church," preached? Or do all the ministers of the visible church, at this day, preach the same doctrine?

My questions, I believe, are, at least, as pertinent as yours; and may suffice to shew, that in the same way in which you attempt to prove, that John did not belong to the Jewish church, it might equally be proved, that none almost of the ancient prophets, or saints, did.

"But was there any institution, or even custom, in the Jewish church, which required John to baptize his converts in Jordan?"—And was there any institution or even custom, in the Jewish church, which required "Ezra to establish synagogues, for divine worship, in all parts of Judea?"

Had not John, Sir, as *a prophet of the Highest*, a special commission from heaven to call the Jewish people to repentance?—*to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers?* by his baptism, specially instituted for this purpose, to confirm the covenant, even the ancient covenant of God, with many?—regularly to induct the Messiah into his sacred office, and *make him manifest to Israel?*—and thus to prepare the way for a new dispensation? A dispensation, on the introduction of which, the true and faithful part of the Jews, having the *covenant confirmed with them*, were to retain their standing in the church of God; while the false and hypocritical, who were only *Jews outwardly*, and who remained irreclaimably impenitent and corrupt, were to be *broken off and rejected*.

Of what avail to your purpose, then, were a thousand facts and questions, such as you have here thought proper to present? And of what pertinency is your impassioned address: "Reader, lay your hand on your heart, and ask yourself in the fear of God, if you can possibly believe, that either John or Jesus, in the whole of the transactions related in this chapter, had any thing to do with the Jewish church or their leaders!"—Yes, Sir, they had *much* to do with them; for it was to them,

to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that they were especially sent; and the fan was then in motion, the floor of the church was to be thoroughly purged, and while the wheat was to be gathered into the garner, the chaff was to be burnt up with unquenchable fire! And what, Sir, if a similar fanning of the church should again take place? Would it prove the commencement of an entirely new church? Did a new church, commence at the time of the reformation from popery? Certainly not.—But to proceed.

“If we look into the next chapter,” you say, “we shall find the manner in which Christ proceeded, in gathering the New Testament church. At the 18th verse, it is said: *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And he said unto them follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further, thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets; and straightway he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the ship, with the hired servants, and went after him.* Having cited, in connexion with these, the account of the two disciples of John, who followed Jesus,* of the scribe, who would follow him whithersoever he went,† of Matthew the publican,‡ and of Philip and Nathaniel; § you proceed to say, “these facts, recorded by the evangelists, place before us a complete history of the commencement of the gospel church!”

Really, Sir, I supposed it was your opinion, that the “Gospel church” commenced three or four years prior to any of “these facts”, under the ministry of John; when Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about, were baptized by him at Jordan. But if you are disposed to give up that ground, for which you and your brethren have so earnestly contended, but which I believe you find to be absolutely untenable; I have no objection to meet you upon this new ground, which you have here assumed.

But what are the “facts” which you have here placed before us? Substantially these, that when Jesus went about preaching the Gospel, some of the people followed

* John i. 35, 37. † Mat. viii. 19, 21. ‡ ix. 9. § John i. 45, 46.

him; and some of those who followed him were appointed to be his principal ministers, under the new dispensation, which, *he proclaimed*, was then *at hand!* All this, Sir, we very well knew before. We knew that "Jesus during his personal ministry, did collect a large number of disciples and followers of both sexes; and that he sent forth *seventy disciples* at one time, to preach the Gospel, and to evince its power by miracles." But that in this there is proof, that the church under the present dispensation is not a continuation of the ancient Zion, we did not know!

Neither did we know, that Jesus and his disciples "stood totally unconnected with the old Jewish church." For we had understood, that Jesus taught those who followed him, that as *the scribes, and pharisees sat in Moses seat, what they said was to be observed*, though their works were not to be approved; that both he and his disciples constantly attended on the synagogue worship, on the solemn feasts of the church at Jerusalem, and on all the institutions of the ancient dispensation; and that he, as well as his forerunner John, constantly preached, that the *kingdom of heaven*, or gospel dispensation was *at hand*, not that it had already come. We, therefore, did not know, neither do we yet believe, that "the disciples of Jesus, with their Master at their head, constituted a church, *a complete church in gospel order*," any more than did John's disciples with "their master at their head."* They all belonged to the same church to which Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and David,

* "But," you say in your *Strictures on Mr. Edwards*, "who would have thought that a man professing to be a Christian minister, could be so attached to the old Jewish system, as to deny Christ and his disciples the *honour* of composing and constituting the *new Christian church*." As it is for arguments of this sort, addressed not to the understanding, but to the passions, that you appear to have a peculiar fondness; I take leave, in my turn, to ask, "Who would have thought that a man, professing to be a Christian minister, could" have had such a prejudice against the ancient economy of God, as to imagine, that it would have been a dishonor to the Messiah, in the days of his flesh, to have had any connexion with that church, which from the beginning had been founded on the promise of redemption by him, which for ages had been looking for his coming with transporting expectation, and to which he had given the most endearing assurances of perpetual love?—Notwithstanding all her elevated hopes, and her joyful songs of praise, in prospect of his coming, and notwithstanding his solemn protestations, that he was mar-

and Elijah, and Isaiah, and Simeon, and Anna, and all the ancient saints belonged.

Indeed, Sir, in all the "facts" which you have placed before us, we see nothing like "a church in gospel order," and "totally independent" of the ancient *Zion of the Holy One of Israel*. We only see that, when Jesus, as well as John, preached in different parts of the land of Israel, calling the people to repentance; under their preaching, the ancient covenant of God was *confirmed with many*, that the whole natural seed of Abraham might not be cast off from the church, when the new dispensation should commence.

The next set of "facts," which you are pleased to present, are to this effect; that the scribes and pharisees, and a great part of the Jewish church, in the days of Christ were hypocrites, unbelieving and wicked; that they were not the true spiritual children of Abraham; that they did not receive Christ, but persecuted him with virulence, and finally put him to death.

All these are solemn "facts," and "facts" which we have often, and seriously pondered. But we had never discovered in them any proof of your antipædobaptist theory. This discovery, Sir, was reserved for you, or some one of your brethren!

We knew, that for their *unbelief*, and their obstinate rejection of the Messiah, a very considerable part of the Jewish people, *natural*, but dead, *branches of the good Olive tree*, were *broken off*, and cast away;—utterly cast away from the church of God. But we had also understood, that the *living natural branches of the Olive tree* were *spared*; that with those believing Israelites, who were not only *outwardly*, but *inwardly* also, *Jews*, the ancient covenant of God was confirmed; and that among them, under a new dispensation, believers of other nations, *branches of the Olive by nature wild*, were *grafted in*—were made fellow heirs of the same body—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.

I ask you, dear Sir, were not most of the ancient prophets despised, and persecuted, by the corrupt part of the ancient church? And have not the faithful ministers of Christ been despised and persecuted, and thousands

ried unto her, and would never forsake her; yet no sooner did he make his public appearance in the world, than he utterly disowned, and cast off, his anciently beloved Zion, and took to himself another bride!—Is this, Sir, the "*honour*," which you claim for the adorable Bridegroom of the church."

of them even to martyrdom, by the corrupt part of the professedly Christian church? What then, if John the Baptist, and Christ and his apostles were despised and persecuted by the corrupt part of the church, in their day? Is there in this the least shadow of proof, that the church of God has not, in all ages, under the ancient, and under the present, dispensation, been essentially one and the same? Certainly, I believe, no candid person will suppose it.

The Pædobaptists, you say, “uniformly argue, that the Jewish and Christian churches are the same; and that the latter is no more than a continuance of the former: *but they have never shewn us when, where, or how, the latter church was connected with the former: and it is believed that they never can. They have seemed wholly to step over this point.*” P. 207.

How was it possible, Sir, for such an assertion to drop from your pen? Have we not constantly shewn, that the covenant of the church, under the ancient dispensation, and under the present, has been always the same?—that the church has, in all ages, been *built on the same foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone?*—that, when *the middle wall of partition was broken down, the Gentiles became fellow heirs with God’s ancient people, and of the same body, and partakers, of the promise by Christ in the gospel?*—that *the branches from the olive by nature wild were grafted in among the natural branches of the good olive tree?*—In a word, that, on the introduction of the present dispensation, when the corrupt part of the ancient church, the unbelieving scribes and pharisees, the despisers and persecutors of Christ, who were only *Jews outwardly*, were rejected, the sound part, those who were *Jews inwardly*, and true to the covenant, were retained; and confirmed in their standing, and with them converts from the Gentile nations were incorporated in the same church?—And is there nothing in all this, Sir, which shews “when, how, or where” the post-Christian church “was connected” with the pre-Christian?—It is devoutly to be hoped, that before you undertake to write again, you will give yourself time to review the publications of the pædobaptists “upon this point.”

In this third Section of your Appendix, and other parts of your book, particularly in your Strictures on
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Mr. Edwards, you appear to take a peculiar satisfaction, in degrading the ancient covenant and church of God. You think proper to give your readers to understand, that the covenant did not contain the promise of the spirit, but “was only outward in the flesh,”* (notwithstanding the apostle’s declaration, that *circumcision was of the heart*;) that “in the constitution of the church, comprising the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations of the members, circumcision held the first and most important place;”† that there is no evidence that even the men of Abraham’s house were penitents,‡ (notwithstanding the testimony of God, that they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment;) that the Jewish religion was so diverse from christianity that for one of that religion to become a christian “his heart must be changed,” and until such a change “he was no better than a Judas;”|| that “to constitute a person a complete member of the Jewish church required nothing more than to be bought with Jewish money or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised;”} that “the Jewish church did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God;”¶ that they were “pharisees and sadducees, publicans and harlots,” the despisers, persecutors, and murderers of Christ and his followers!¶¶

These things, Sir, and numerous others of a similar complexion, you have thought proper to represent, *in general terms*; as if such was the character of the ancient church *generally*; and not only so but as if there was nothing in the covenant, or constitution, of the church, which required any thing better. Yet this is the covenant, which the Lord *confirmed unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an EVERLASTING COVENANT*; and this is the church, which the Lord declared should be unto him a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS *and a HOLY NATION*, which he acknowledged as his PECULIAR TREASURE, and which he promised to make AN ETERNAL EXCELLENCY, A JOY OF MANY GENERATIONS!

Now I entreat you, Sir, solemnly to consider, whether the course, which, in your zeal for antipædobaptism, you have thought proper to adopt be not almost exactly the course, which infidels have taken, to bring into reproach both the CHURCH OF GOD, and THE GOD HIMSELF OF THE CHURCH.

* Appendix, p. 213. † p. 192. ‡ p. 193. || p. 235. § p. 194.
¶ p. 194, 201, 210, &c. &c.

We know, Sir, very well, that the ancient church, as well as the modern, was guilty of most awful defection and apostacy: but it is the ancient church, not in its corrupt and apostatized state, as you would make your readers believe,* but in a reformed and advanced state, that we hold, has been continued under the present dispensation. We do not hold, that it was among those *branches, which, through unbelief were broken off*, that the *branches from the olive by nature wild, were ingrafted into the good olive tree*. But we believe, and think it sufficiently proved, that the living *natural branches, of the olive tree were spared*, and that *among them the foreign, Gentile, branches were ingrafted, that of the root and fatness of the olive they might partake together*.

Do you wish, Sir, to have it forgotten, that if the pre-Christian church had its dark, it had also, its bright side? At what period under the present dispensation, has there been a greater proportion of the visible church true to the everlasting covenant, than there was, under the ancient dispensation, at the period to which her God referred, when he was pleased to say: *I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown?* ISRAEL WAS HOLINESS TO THE LORD, AND THE FIRST FRUITS OF HIS INCREASE!

Was it not under the ancient dispensation, that Zion so rapturously sung; *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels?* And was it not to the church, under the ancient dispensation, that Jehovah gave his assurance of perpetual love? *But Zion said the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*

Is the ancient Zion then to be despised, and loaded with reproach, by the professed friends of her God? Is she unworthy even to be named, with the church under the present dispensation? *If through Jesus Christ the*

* Appendix, p. 211, and elsewhere.

blessing of Abraham has come upon us Gentiles ; does it become us to boast ; not remembering that we bear not the root, but the root us !—Do you hope for any thing better than to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God !

I confess to you, Sir, that I am often lost in amazement, when I read, or hear the reproaches, and vehement declamations, which so commonly come from your quarter, against the ancient covenant and church of God. And I cannot but think, that if these are the best arguments, which you can employ against us ; you might very well give up your side of this dispute into the hands of the avowed enemies of the Bible, who have always taken a peculiar pleasure, in loading the church, both ancient, and modern, with invective and contempt.

Pardon me, Sir, this plainness. I certainly impute to you no unchristian design. The honour of God, and the interests of truth and religion, I trust, lie near your heart. And, therefore, the more to be lamented I consider it, that an overweening zeal for a favorite theory, should hurry you away so far upon the enemies' ground.

On the whole, it is by this time, I trust, sufficiently plain, that all your arguments to prove, that the Christian church is not a continuation of the ancient Zion, are totally unavailing ; and that my arguments to prove that the church, as well as the covenant of God, is but one, throughout all generations, remain unshaken.

Your's, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER XV.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

HAVING shewn at large, that the covenant and church of God are essentially the same, under the present dispensation as under the former ; and answered your objections and arguments against this doctrine ; I now pass to consider, more particularly, the connected subject of BAPTISM.

A question of considerable consequence between us,

and proper to be considered in this place, is, *Whether baptism have come in the place of circumcision?* You hold that it has not; I hold that it has.

Your reasons for holding, that baptism is not in the place of circumcision, you have been so good as to state in the second Section of your Appendix. To these reasons, I take leave to give a moment's attention.

"1. The law of circumcision was a positive law, not at all dependent on the nature and fitness of things:—this is precisely the case with baptism; therefore, there can be no arguing from one to the other." P. 187.

If there "can be no arguing" from one "positive" institute to another; yet one "positive" institute may certainly come *in the place of* another. Your quotation from Dr. Emmons, therefore, relative to this point, is entirely irrelevant; and your impeachment of his "consistency" equally, I think, unfounded.

"2. The institution of circumcision was expressly limited to males." Ibid.

This, Sir, we acknowledge; and it is also well known, that, between males and females, under the ancient dispensation, a distinction, in several important particulars, with respect to divine institutions, was made. But we are clearly taught by the apostle, that, under the present dispensation, this distinction no longer obtains; for now, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE.* "There is now no distinction of nations, ranks, or sexes, with respect to gospel acceptance, privileges, and blessings; no difference between Jew and Gentile, or master and servant, or *male and female*;—as there was in former dispensations."*

As the distinction is thus abolished, and females are placed on the same footing with males, with respect to divine institutions; no reason appears why an ordinance, to which females as well as males are now admitted, may not have come in the place of an ordinance which was anciently restricted to males.

"3. The law of circumcision," you say, "required no previous profession of faith and repentance, neither in adults nor infants, as a qualification for that institution; but the gospel positively requires such a profession in order to baptism, without even an exception in favor of infants."

* Guise on Gal. iii. 28.

This, Sir, is begging the very question in dispute. Neither part of your proposition is either admitted on our side, or proved on yours. But in direct opposition to what you here assert, I have proved at large, that an explicit and sincere profession of religion, in order to complete membership in the church, was required under the ancient dispensation, as well as under the present.

Are you willing, Sir, to have it understood, that you are so little read on the subject, as not to know, that when proselytes would join the ancient church, an explicit profession of religion was required of them, previous to their circumcision?—With respect to “infants,” as the covenant and church are still the same, their relation to the church remains also the same.

“4. A male slave, bought with money of an age above eight days, whether a believer or an infidel, whether an idolator, or an atheist, had the same right to circumcision, as the infant seed of his master had.”

This, Sir, in the terms in which it is stated, is not admitted as correct; and proof of it you have not been pleased to offer. But were it admitted in its whole extent, it would constitute no valid argument in the present case. For as already shewn, under the second article, the distinction between *free* and *bond*, as well as between male and female, is not known under the present dispensation. Masters and servants, with respect to the church and its institutions, are now placed upon the same footing.

“We ask,” you say, “and we hope we shall have a fair and candid answer, if such an one can be given, When and where has the right of servants, as distinguished from that of children, been repealed.” P. 179.

“Such an answer, can,” Sir, be given, and I am ready to give it. “The right of servants, as distinguished from that of children,” is repealed, or a declaration of the repeal is made, in the same *twenty-eighth verse of the third chapter of Galatians*, which I have just before had occasion to quote. For you will be pleased to observe, that though it is expressly declared, that, under the present dispensation, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female*, NEITHER FREE NOR BOND; it is not added, *there is neither PARENT NOR CHILD!* So plain it is, that while, under the present dispensation, “bond men,” as such, *are not* known, with respect to

divine institutions; children, as such, *are* known; and according to the express word of prophecy, remain *as afore-time*.

Had this, Sir, been duly considered, you and your brother Merrill would probably have spared yourselves much fervid declamation, in which, particularly on the subject of "*southern planters and their slaves*," you appear to have indulged with peculiar satisfaction.

"5. The rite itself is so very *unlike* the gospel institution, that it seems extremely unnatural to infer one from the other."

That baptism is not in its form like circumcision is readily admitted. But what does this prove? Cannot one thing take the place of another, unless they be in form alike? Has not the public worship of God, under the present dispensation, come in the place of the ancient worship? But what can be more "unlike" than the forms of worship now observed, and those of the ancient Tabernacle, and Temple?

"6. Circumcision," you say, "might be lawfully administered by any person, at least any head of a family, whether male or female; baptism is to be administered by particular officers, in the Christian church, called and qualified for the work."

This, if true, is only a circumstantial difference, not in the least affecting the nature of either institution; and, therefore, can afford no availing argument.

Before the time of Moses, sacrifices might be offered "by any person," at least by any "father of a family; but under the Mosaic economy sacrifices were to be offered "by particular officers of the church, called and qualified for the work." Yet who, from this difference, ever imagined, that the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy, did not take the place of the sacrifices offered, under the preceding patriarchal dispensation?

"Other dissimilarities," you say, "might be urged, but these are thought sufficient to shew, that it is not the easiest thing in the world, to infer baptism from circumcision." And in your favorite style you are pleased to add: "It certainly requires *a large stock of mystical, jesuitical, ingenuity* to make an inference plausible, where the nature, act, and design are so different."—And do you not think, Sir, that it requires no very small "stock" of patience and moderation, to read and attempt to an-

swer a book, in which, instead of argument, one meets; at every turn, with the out-breakings of a spirit, so little becoming the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus?

Had you proved, Sir, that baptism is essentially "different," in its "nature and design," from circumcision, you would have proved something to your purpose. But this you have not proved; and until this be proved, a hundred "dissimilarities" of a merely circumstantial nature will avail you nothing.

I am, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER XVI.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my *last* Letter, I endeavored to answer the arguments, by which you would prove, that baptism has not come in the place of circumcision; in *this*, I propose briefly to state the arguments, by which I would prove that it has.

1. Baptism is now, as circumcision anciently was, an instituted pre-requisite to a regular standing in the visible church.

With respect to this point, simply, there is no dispute between us. Whether children are to be considered, as in any sense members of the church, or not; in this we agree, that under the present dispensation, baptism is required, as was circumcision under the ancient, in order to regular membership. In this respect, then, baptism is certainly in the place of circumcision.

2. Baptism, under the present dispensation, is of the same significance, with circumcision, under the ancient.

As a *sign*, circumcision signified the renovation of the heart, or regeneration. CIRCUMCISE, *therefore*, the *foreskin of your HEART*, said Moses, *and be no more stiff necked*. And again, *The Lord thy God will CIRCUMCISE thine HEART and the HEART OF THY SEED, to love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live*. This injunction to *circumcise their*

hearts, is evidently equivalent with that in Ezekiel, to *make them new hearts*; and the assurance, that the Lord would *circumcise their heart and the heart of their seed*, is, also, of the same import with the promise in Ezekiel, *A new heart, also, will I give thee, and a new spirit will I put within thee*. Accordingly the apostle to the Romans says, *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and CIRCUMCISION is of the HEART, in the spirit and not in the letter*.

As circumcision signified the renovation of the heart, or regeneration; so baptism signifies the same thing. *Except a man be BORN OF WATER, and of THE SPIRIT, said Christ to Nicodemus, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. In this memorable passage, being *born of water*, or baptized with water, and being *born of the Spirit*, or baptized with the Spirit, are presented together, the one as the *sign*, the other as the *thing signified*. For by ONE SPIRIT, says the apostle, *are we all BAPTIZED into one body*. *By his mercy he saved us, by the WASHING OF REGENERATION, and RENEWING of the HOLY GHOST*. This is evidently equivalent to being *born of WATER and of the SPIRIT*.

As it is in renewing the heart that the Holy Spirit applies the great *atonement*, for cleansing and justification; so baptism alludes not only to the influence of the Spirit, but also to the *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*: and to the blood of Christ, as an atonement for sin, evident reference was also had in the bloody rite of circumcision.

On the whole, it is too plain to admit of any reasonable dispute, that baptism now signifies the same thing, which was anciently signified by circumcision. And as baptism is now an instituted sign to be used in the church, signifying the renovation of the heart, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, as circumcision anciently was; in this respect, again, baptism has evidently taken the place of circumcision.

3. Baptism, under the present dispensation, is a *seal* of the same thing, of which circumcision was a *seal* under the ancient.

We have the express declaration of the apostle, that circumcision was a *seal of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith*; of that *faith which Abraham had before he was*

circumcised, as well as afterwards, and of which every true believer is the subject. There is but one RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, or which is the object of true faith; namely, the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, by which believers, in all ages, have been, and will be, justified. Of this righteousness circumcision was a seal.

Of the same RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, baptism is now also a seal. The *inward seal* of the RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, is the Holy Spirit renewing and sanctifying the heart, and applying the blood of Christ; and as baptism is a *sign* of this gracious operation of the Spirit, it is also an *outward seal* of the same righteousness. For as many,—as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. The RIGHTEOUSNESS of faith, in a word, includes all the promised blessings; and baptism now, as circumcision anciently was, is, undoubtedly, a seal of God's gracious covenant with his church; and in this respect therefore, the one has taken the place of the other.

4. That baptism has come in the place of circumcision, we are decisively taught, by the apostle, in Col. ii. 10—13.

And ye are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised, with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him.

“The plain obvious ideas, which lie upon the face of this passage, are these: circumcision and baptism signify the same thing; the thing signified by both is the renovation of the heart, or the resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life; and this renovation of the heart, or spiritual resurrection, is the fruit of the special operation of God.*” The apostle, it is true, is here speaking of spiritual circumcision and spiritual baptism. But if *being buried with Christ*, in spiritual baptism, is the same as being *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*; then external baptism, it must certainly be concluded, has come in the place of external circumcision.

* Emmen's Sermon on Baptism.

The four arguments now offered, Sir, are neither “*mystical*” nor “*jesuitical*,” but plain and scriptural; and in my view amply sufficient to establish the point, now in proof. If baptism is now, as circumcision anciently was, an instituted *pre-requisite* for regular membership in the church; if it is a *sign* of the same significance; if it is a *seal* of the same covenant blessings; and if, as the apostle plainly teaches us, being *baptized* is, in effect, the same thing, as being *circumcised*: Then, notwithstanding any “*dissimilarities*” of a circumstantial nature, the conclusion is obvious, and invincible, that *baptism* now holds the same place in the church of God, which *circumcision* anciently held.

Accordingly, by the primitive fathers of the church, it was uniformly considered and treated in this light. This fact, I believe, will not be denied.

I am, &c.

*
LETTER XVII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my preceding Letters, in connexion with my Two Discourses, the following important points have been made.

1. That the covenant, of which circumcision was a *token*, and *seal*, included all the great and precious promises ever made, in Christ, to the church.

2. That God's covenant with the church has always been essentially the same, though unfolded with increasing clearness, under several successive dispensations.

3. That the church of God has been but *one*, and will be but *one*, from the time when Eve was first styled the *MOTHER of all LIVING*, till its ultimate consummation in glory. And,

4. That under the present dispensation, baptism holds the same place in the church, which circumcision held, under the ancient,

These several points I have endeavored to establish by clear, and abundant scripture proof; and your ob-

jections and arguments against them, it has been my aim fairly to meet and answer. The general conclusion from the whole may be expressed in two particulars.

1. Children now hold the same covenant relation to the church, which they anciently held.—The church is the same, the covenant the same, the promise the same.—Therefore,

2. The infant seed of the church are now as proper subjects for the *seal* of the covenant, in the form of baptism, as anciently they were for the same *seal*, in the form of circumcision.—Their covenant relation to the church is the same, and the nature and import of the seal are the same.

This conclusion, notwithstanding all your attempts to make it a subject of raillery and reproach, I am still not ashamed to believe to be fair, and scriptural, and solid; and amply sufficient to warrant the serious practice, and enforce the important duty, of INFANT BAPTISM.

In the present case, the burden of proof, certainly devolves upon you. Yes, Sir; I feel warranted, upon fair and honourable ground, to “demand of you categorical proof, when, and where this *right of infants was vacated.*” And I take leave to insist, that it indispensably devolves on you, either clearly to shew, by positive scriptural proof, that infants are not now, as they formerly were, proper subjects for the seal of the covenant; or else candidly to acknowledge, that the people of God are now, as formerly they were, solemnly bound to have the sacred seal applied to their *infant seed.*

You yourself, Sir, have virtually conceded, that if the church under the present dispensation be a continuation of the ancient church; then the privileges and duties, with respect to children, must be essentially the same. In your “*Strictures on Mr. Edward’s Candid Reasons,*” you are pleased to observe: “Two points which are *all-important*, yea, which are the very *sine qua non* to support his scheme, he has left totally without proof: viz. That the Jewish and Christian churches are the same; and that female infants were admitted to membership by divine appointment.”—“For Mr. Edwards therefore to prove, that infants had a right to membership in the Jewish church, is proving what nobody denies; and will afford no support to his argument, unless it can be

proved, that the two churches are one and the same.* And to the same effect you have expressed yourself in several other places. Indeed all your principal arguments and objections, against INFANT BAPTISM, as well as those of your brethren generally, proceed upon the assumption, that God's present covenant and church are not his ancient covenant and his ancient Zion, continued under a new dispensation, but "entirely distinct from them."

Now, Sir, the very things, which you required of Mr. Edwards, as "*all-important*," and as "*the very sine qua non*" to the support of his scheme, I trust I have fully done. I have proved, that the church of God, under the ancient dispensation, and under the present, is *one* and the *same*; and have shewn, that the ancient distinction between *male* and *female* is abolished: and therefore, as it is acknowledged on all hands, that the membership, in some sense, of *male infants*, in the one church of God, was divinely instituted, so females are now to be admitted upon the same footing. Accordingly, without any distinction of sexes, Christ graciously says, *Suffer little children to come unto me; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.* Thus, the "*all important*" points are proved; and all that is done, which, according to your own representation, was necessary to be done, in order to establish the doctrine of Infant Baptism.

Upon this ground, Sir, we may certainly, with the utmost fairness, hold you. And it now lies with you, either fairly and conclusively to refute the arguments, which have been adduced, in proof of the essential oneness, throughout all generations, both of the covenant and the church; and clearly to shew, that the ancient Zion of the Holy one of Israel has been abolished, and an entirely new church instituted; or else candidly to acknowledge, that the seal of the covenant is now, as anciently it was, to be applied to the infant seed of the church.

Your objections and implications, so profusely scattered up and down in your book, respecting the want of faith, or other qualifications, in infants, though calculated to operate an effect upon such as are more influenced by declamation than by argument, are as totally irrelevant, as they are highly improper. They might

* Appendix, p. 232. † p. 235.

every one of them be urged with equal pertinency, against infants being admitted to the seal of the covenant, under the ancient dispensation, as under the present.— For as the church is the same, the covenant the same, and the seal, though different in form, yet of the same significance and design; no reason can appear why infants are not now as duly qualified, and in all respects as proper subjects, for baptism, as anciently they were for circumcision. But God, who is infinitely wise, certainly saw fit to institute, that the seal of his covenant should be applied to the infant seed of his church; and does it, then, become men, does it become his professed friends, not only to call in question, but even to reproach, his sacred institution?

Respectfully yours, &c.

*
LETTER XVIII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

GOD, though a sovereign, does not act without plan. Throughout his whole vast system, means and ends are connected, with the most perfect arrangement. If, in his sovereign purpose in Christ Jesus before the world was, the eternal salvation of his elect, was determined; the way and the means of their salvation were also determined. And if in his gracious and everlasting covenant, he has been pleased to make known his purpose to continue the church, from age to age to the end of the world; it would be reasonable to conclude, that he has also made known the way and the means of its continuance.

Accordingly ample provision for the continuance of the church is evidently contained in the promises of the covenant. *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee, in their generations; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* In the first of these promises it was provided, that, through sovereign grace, the church should be continued from generation to generation, *in the line of natural descent*; and in the second, that, from period to period, *strangers and foreign-*

ers should be brought within the pale of its privileges and blessings, until *all the families of the earth should become FELLOW HEIRS, AND OF THE SAME BODY, AND PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE by the Gospel.*

But though it was graciously provided, that the church should be continued down in the line of natural descent; or, that in every generation there should be, among the natural offspring of the church, a holy seed, with whom the covenant should be confirmed; yet it was not engaged, that all the natural offspring should certainly be heirs of the promises.

The promise respecting the children of the church was in a sense conditional; and none were to be considered as the children of the promise, but those with respect to whom the conditions of the promise were fulfilled. Had not Abraham walked before God, according to the covenant requirement, and faithfully commanded his children and his household after him; God would not have stood engaged by the covenant so to impart his grace to them, as to make it certain that they would keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, and so inherit the promised blessings. As it was with Abraham, so it was to be with his successors in the church, whether of his natural descendants, or of other nations: if they would be entitled to claim covenant blessings for their children, they must fulfil the conditions of the promise respecting them; *they must have the faith, and do the works of Abraham.**

* Upon this subject of conditionality I wish to be clearly understood. The conditions of a promise, I consider in the light of means to an end. If I promise a man a sum of money, on *condition* of his doing a piece of service, his doing that service is a *mean* of obtaining that money; if I promise a child a favor, on *condition* of his good conduct, in any specified instance, his good conduct, in that instance, is a *mean* of obtaining the promised favor. So, if God promise mankind the pardon of sin, on *condition* of their believing in Christ, their believing in Christ is a *mean* of obtaining pardon: and if he promise to believers the rewards of his heavenly kingdom, on *condition* of their persevering in the life of faith unto the end, their perseverance in faith is a *mean* of obtaining those eternal rewards.

But it is worthy to be noted, that *ends* are not the less certain because they are connected with *means*. If God have determined, that any supposed *ends* shall take place, but that they shall take place in connexion with certain antecedent *means*; then, though the *means* are necessary to the *ends*, yet the *ends* are as certain as if there were no *means* in the case. For the divine

This is a summary view of the provision of the covenant, according to the explanation given of it, under the *second general head* of my "Two Discourses." But to this you have thought proper to object; and have professedly undertaken to shew, that my "application of the promise is unscriptural." Your objections to this part of my Discourses, as offered in your "Strictures," and other things militating with it in other parts of your book, it may be useful briefly to consider.

But here, Sir, I take leave to premise, that rightly to understand the provision of the covenant, is unquestionably of vast importance to all; and the question respect-

purpose secures both the one and the other. And if God have engaged, by promise, or by covenant, to bestow any blessings upon mankind, but to bestow them on certain *conditions*; though the *conditions*, in this case, are necessary to the attainment of the blessings; yet the blessings may be as certain as if no *conditions* were required: For all the grace, necessary to the fulfilment of the *conditions*, on which the blessings are to be conferred, may be secured in the covenant, or promise.

If God's *purpose* of election secures the salvation of some of mankind, it also secures the *means and conditions* of their salvation; and if his gracious *promise* secures the eternal blessedness of all who believe in his Son, it also secures that *perseverance* in the life of faith, with which their eternal blessedness is connected. But neither the purpose, nor the promise of God, renders the means, or conditions, of salvation, unnecessary.

To apply these remarks to the case now in hand:—The promise, *to be a God to the church and to the seed of the church*, is not the less certain, because, in the sense explained, it is conditional. For if God engages to be a God to the church and to the seed of the church, to the latest generations; he also engages to bestow all the grace necessary to the fulfilment of the conditions of the covenant, *with respect to those, who are to be counted for the seed.* *I know Abraham*, he says, *that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; THAT THE LORD MAY BRING UPON ABRAHAM THAT WHICH HE HATH SPOKEN OF HIM. I WILL pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon their offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. AND I WILL GIVE THEM ONE HEART AND ONE WAY, THAT THEY MAY FEAR ME FOREVER, FOR THE GOOD OF THEM, AND OF THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM.*

In a word, though in one sense the promise is *conditional*, yet in another sense, as stated in my Discourses, it is *absolute*.—Though it requires parents to be true and faithful to the covenant, as a condition of covenant blessings to their seed; yet it absolutely secures the transmission of these blessings to some of the seed of the church, from generation to generation.

ing it, instead of being treated as a matter of party concern, can never be considered with too much seriousness and attention.

Respecting this question, we know there are different opinions, even among paedobaptists. But it is particularly to be observed, that the main subject in dispute, between us and you, does not depend upon this point. Those of my brethren, who differ from me, with respect to the import of the covenant, are nevertheless upon strong ground, for the support of the doctrine and practice of Infant Baptism. For if God have been pleased to institute, as certainly he has, that the token of the covenant should be applied to the infant seed of the church; then whether we rightly understand the purport of the institution or not, it is undoubtedly our duty, and our privilege, sacredly to observe it.

Is Infant Baptism, or the application of the token and seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church, of divine institution? is one question: and what is the true import and "profit" of it? is distinctly another. Whatever differences of opinion may obtain with respect to this latter question, they do not essentially affect the former. And in our dispute with you, it is not necessarily incumbent on us to shew the import, either of the promise respecting children, or of the application to them of the seal; but only to shew, as has been abundantly done, that such an application is of divine institution.

These observations I have thought proper to premise; as you and your brethren have shewn a disposition to avail yourselves of some differences of opinion among us, respecting the provisions of the covenant; and even to hold a language, as if it were incumbent on us to shew what is the *import* of Infant Bap**tism**, in order to prove its *obligation*.

In replying to your objections and remarks, with respect to my views of the provision of the covenant, my first duty is to correct a very material misstatement.

In this part of your Strictures, you undertake to shew, that "the application of the promise to *believers and unbelievers*, or to believing parents and their unbelieving children, is unscriptural."* And after shewing at large, that "believers only are considered as partaking in the

* Appendix, p. 263.

“blessings of the promise,” you are pleased to say: “But the author of the Discourses has advocated a sentiment exceedingly different from this: it implies the following, *If ye, parents one or both of you, be Christ’s, then are ye, and ALL your children, Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise!*”

Much to the same effect is to be found in different parts of your book; and upon the assumption, that our views of the covenant make *unbelievers*, as well as *believers, children of Abraham and heirs of the promise*, the most of your objections and remarks proceed.

Now, Sir, I must take leave to say, that I can scarcely conceive of a more palpable misstatement of my sentiments, than this which you have thought proper to exhibit. No where, in my Discourses, is any thing to be found like what you represent as being my “application of the covenant to believers and unbelievers.” No where, in my Discourses, can you find the least intimation, that “unbelieving children” are Abrahams seed and heirs according to the promise.—Nor is this all. Not only is no such sentiment to be found in my book; but the directly opposite sentiment is most clearly and abundantly expressed.

Page 280, you have this remarkable passage; “Indeed it is believed, that Mr. Worcester himself has fully *conceded* this very point, notwithstanding all his labored arguments to prove, that the baptized children of gentile believers are Abraham’s seed. His words are, “To become entitled; then, to the blessings of the covenant, Abraham must walk before God, and be perfect; must have *true faith*, and be *sincerely obedient*. This was necessary as it respected himself personally, and equally necessary as it respected his children.”—This quotation you adduce as a *concession*; and you evidently intend, that your readers should understand, that my “labored arguments” had been employed to prove “a sentiment exceedingly different from this.”

I am constrained, Sir, to ask, Did you read my Discourses? Or did you only glance your eye over them, and happening to light on the passage here quoted, immediately conclude, that this was something “exceedingly different” from what I had attempted to prove?

This passage, Sir, which you have chosen to quote, as a *concession*, is not a passage which inadvertently escaped

me. It stands in connexion with a train of reasoning and illustration, under my second general head, the whole of which is in perfect coincidence with it. And instead of adducing it as a *concession*, you might with great propriety have adduced it, with its connexion entire, as *proof*, that I held no such sentiment, as you had attributed to me; and that, in all which you had previously said, you had totally misrepresented my views.

Yes, Sir, I certainly did say, as you have quoted, that, "to become entitled to the blessings of the covenant Abraham must walk before God and be perfect; must have *true faith*, and be *sincerely obedient*"; and that "this was necessary as it respected himself personally, and equally necessary as it respected his children." And in perfect agreement with this is the whole, which I said, with reference to "the application of the covenant." Not only was the whole of my illustration of my second doctrinal head, perfectly coincident; but in my *improvement*, I was, if possible, still more explicit.

My second article of improvement was as follows.— "From the view, which we have taken of the covenant made with Abraham, it appears, that this covenant is never *established* with any *but true believers*, or the subjects of true religion." This inference, it was an object with me to illustrate and enforce, in a manner so plain, that none should misunderstand me; and I confidently appeal to every person, who has read it, whether it be capable of being understood. The closing sentence of the article is in these words: "And under the gospel, it is *only true believers*, such as are in Christ by faith, *who are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*"

But notwithstanding this explicitness, and perfect consistency throughout, you have thought proper to represent, that I "applied the covenant to believers and *unbelievers*;" and that I "advocated a sentiment, which implies, that *If ye, parents, one or both of you, be Christ's, then are ye, ALL your children, Abrahams seed, and heirs according to the promise.*"

I can assure you, Sir, it is with extreme regret, that I find myself obliged to return to you, and to state before the public, so palpable and so injurious, a misrepresentation. But palpable and injurious as it is, you have thought proper to carry it through no less than about *twenty pages* of your book. From the 263d page to the

283d, the principal part of what you have offered, proceeds upon the assumption, that I had applied the covenant to believers and *unbelievers*!"—Your strictures, of course, are totally irrelevant.

Something similar to what you have here done, I am sorry to say, Sir, is not uncommon. So far as I have been acquainted with antipædobaptists, they seem disposed, generally, to give a similar representation of our views. Against this procedure, therefore, I here take leave to record my *serious and solemn* PROTEST. Let our sentiments be represented in their true light; and if they will not stand by the word of God, then let them fall.

I hold, indeed, that all true believers are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; that as God promised to be a God to Abraham and *his seed*, so he promises to be a God to all true believers, and *their seed*. But as Abraham was required, as a condition of the promise, to walk before God and be perfect; to give up his children according to the divine institution, and to *command them after him to keep the way of the Lord*; the same also is now required of all believers. And therefore, though God, according to his promise, bestows his grace upon children, in covenant faithfulness to their parents; yet the covenant is established only with *believers*, and none are to be considered as children of Abraham, until they are made the subjects of renewing grace.

These views of the covenant I believe to be correct and scriptural; and if they be, they are certainly of vast importance; and may serve strongly to *enforce* the duty of applying the seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church. But whether correct or not, let it again be particularly noted, the doctrine of Infant Baptism does not depend for its *support* upon this ground. For as God has been pleased to appoint, that the token of the covenant should be applied to the infant seed of the church, this institution is to be sacredly observed, whether we see the reason or profit of it correctly or not.

Your's, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER, XIX.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

THOUGH by far the greater part of what you intended should bear upon my second doctrinal head, as it proceeded upon a wrong statement of my sentiments, is totally irrelevant; yet there are some things interspersed in your book, which militate with what I really hold to be the provision of the covenant. These I shall now attempt to collect and answer.

1. "By the special appointment of God, Abraham," you say, was placed in a situation, different from all other believers; and in this peculiar situation, many things were promised to his seed, which are not promised to the seed of other believers." P. 269.

This, Sir, in a limited sense, is true. Abraham undoubtedly was, "by the special appointment of God," made the patriarch of the church, and the father of them that believe; and to him, in this high character, some promises were made, which are not, in the same sense, made to other believers. But it does not hence follow, that the promise, *to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*, was in such a sense peculiar to Abraham as to have no application to others. On the contrary, from express declarations of scripture, too numerous to be cited, it is evident this great promise is of general application.

*I know Abraham, that he will COMMAND his children, and his household after him; and they SHALL keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.** It will not, I trust, be deemed, that in this declaration, the Lord had reference, directly, to the promise made to Abraham, *to be a God to him and to his seed after him*. But in perfect coincidence with this is the general direction and promise: *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart therefrom.†* In perfect agreement with this also, are the memorable words of the Psalmist: *He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their CHILDREN; that the generation to come might know them, even the CHILDREN that should be born, who*

* Gen. xviii. 19.

† Prov. xxii. 6.

*should arise and declare them to THEIR CHILDREN: THAT THEY MIGHT SET THEIR HOPE IN GOD, AND NOT FORGET THE WORKS OF GOD, BUT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.** In this passage, is it not clearly represented, that according to the covenant of God, piety was to be handed down from parents to children, by means of parental fidelity and care?

One principal purpose, for which John was sent, in the spirit and power of Elijah, was, *to turn the heart of the father unto the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; and in this way, according to the tenor of the everlasting covenant, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord; lest he should come, and smite the earth with a curse.†*

Please to observe, Sir; so important was the covenant provision, with respect to children, that owing to a neglect and contempt of it, the earth was in danger of being SMITTEN WITH A CURSE.

As for me, this is my COVENANT with them, saith the Lord. (What covenant? Undoubtedly the covenant with Abraham and his seed.) My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of THY SEED, nor out of the mouth of thy SEED'S SEED, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever. And I will direct their work in truth; and I will make an EVERLASTING COVENANT with them. And THEIR SEED shall be known among the Gentiles, and THEIR OFFSPRING among the people. All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the SEED WHICH THE LORD HATH BLESSED. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the SEED OF THE BLESSED of the Lord, and THEIR OFFSPRING WITH THEM. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, AND OF THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM.‡

Now, Sir, suffer me to ask, are not children, in these covenant promises, connected with their parents? Does not Jehovah, here, expressly engage to bestow spiritual, and saving blessings upon the *offspring* of the church, as he promised to be a God to Abraham's *seed*? And if so;

* Psalm lxxviii 5—7 † Hopkins System, Vol. p. 259.
‡ Mat. iv. 6. Luke i. 17.

of what avail to your point is your distinction between the situation of Abraham and that of other believers?

Upon your antipædobaptist principles, what can be the meaning of these, and numerous other similar promises, with which the Scriptures abound? Why are children, in covenant promises made to the church, so constantly connected with their parents? The question is worthy of your serious consideration; and is entitled to a fair and satisfactory answer.

2. You make a distinction between "the natural descendants of Abraham and Gentile believers."

After conceding "*in a general way*," as you seem to have been constrained to do, by an unpropitious quotation from the excellent Dr. Fuller, "*that spiritual blessings were promised*," in the covenant, "*to the NATURAL seed of Abraham*," you are pleased to observe: "All this may be readily *admitted*, with respect to *Abraham and his DESCENDANTS*; but it does not prove, that the same things are engaged, or fulfilled, to *GENTILE BELIEVERS!*" P. 271.

Really, Sir, this is "*admitting*" a great deal. We have always understood you to hold, that God's *ancient covenant* with his church has been annulled; but we had not, until now, understood, that you would so "*readily admit*" *that covenant* to have contained greater and richer promises, than are made to the church, under the present dispensations!

According to your "*admission*," in his ancient covenant, God did engage, "*in a general way*," to believers, to be a God, not only to them, but also to their seed; not only to save them, but also to bestow "*spiritual blessings*" upon their offspring. But "*to Gentile believers the same things are neither engaged, nor fulfilled!*"—After this, Sir, you will no more, I hope, think it strange, that we, of the pædobaptist faith, are zealous in our adherence to God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed!

However, I trust I have not failed to make it appear, that the same everlasting covenant, which was to abide, though *the mountains depart, and the hills be removed*, is still God's covenant with his church; and therefore, that "*the same things*," for substance, are now "*engaged, and fulfilled, to Gentile believers*," which anciently were to the patriarch, and his descendants." All who are

Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. And therefore, the blessing of Abraham, not merely "external church privileges, such as the baptizing and constituting children church members," as, when it suits your purpose, you would have it thought that we hold, but every blessing of the covenant, has come upon the Gentiles.

3. A great proportion of believers, "you say," are single persons, who have neither companions nor children; and many who live and die childless." P. 266.

This you have repeatedly alledged, with an air of great assurance, as if it were a conclusive proof, that God's covenant with the church can have no respect to children.

"We have already seen," you are pleased to assure us, "that a large proportion of believers die without issue. If this promise, "in its full force," you add, "has been transmitted to them, it required, besides, their faith and fidelity, another condition, which the author of the Discourses has overlooked. It must run to them and to their seed, *provided they have any.*"

Really, Sir, there is a very great infelicity, attending your objections and arguments. *The righteous is ever merciful and lendeth; his SEED ("provided he have any," according to you it should have been!) is blessed. The just man walketh in his integrity; his children ("provided he have any!") are blessed after him. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children ("provided you have any!") unclean; but now are they holy.*

If, in your view, the scriptures are not sufficiently accurate, I hope, Sir, at least, you will not charge the fault to my account.

"There is also," you say, "a very material difference with respect to the kind of faith, with which the blessing of Abraham is connected. The Apostle gives no intimation, that he means any other faith, than that which is common to every believer; that is, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. But Mr. Worcester's faith, to which the promise of God is conditionally made, is a faith respecting the salvation of our children. None of these (who have no children,) can be supposed to have this kind of faith." P. 266.

I ask you, Sir, are there not many promises made to the people of God, besides the simple promise, *He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved*? Are there not promises, adapted to all the various circumstances and situations, both of the church at large, and of individual believers? May not some believers be in a situation to exercise faith in some particular promises, in which others are not? But because one believer exercises faith in a particular promise, in which another does not; is it therefore to be concluded, that the faith of the one is of a different "kind" from that of the other? No, Sir; but the same kind of faith may be exercised in different situations, with respect to different promises.

This idea, Sir, I believe to be of sufficient importance to engage your serious attention.

In disputing with us with respect to the covenant, you and your brethren appear to confine yourselves to the *single* promise of salvation to those who believe; as if this were the only promise made to God's people. This I believe to be a fruitful source of mistake and error.—The promises made to the church, and to believers, individually, are certainly numerous and various. These promises are all contained in the covenant, *confirmed by God in Christ*. By some true believers more of the promises are understood, and believingly embraced, than by others; and therefore some, more extensively than others, enjoy the promised blessings.

By some the great promise of the covenant—*to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*—may be understood and embraced, in its whole extent; while by others it may be understood and embraced, but in part. But to me, Sir, I confess, it appears to be a matter of infinite importance, that this promise be well understood, and believingly embraced, in its whole extent.

4. "According to Mr. Worcester," you say, "if we rightly understand him, the salvation of the children of believers depends principally upon the faith and fidelity of their parents." But "there is not a word of this conditional business" (in the chapter, on which the Discourses are founded,) "about the faith and fidelity of parents, by which their children become subjects of grace; but according to the Apostle, both parents and children become subjects of grace *only by becoming believers in Christ*." P. 264, 265.

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It is not possible, Sir, that you should have understood me to hold, that any, either parents or children, are ever saved, otherwise than by the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus the Saviour. The representation, therefore, which, in this instance, as well as in others, you have thought proper to give of my sentiments, I must leave to your reflections in a serious hour.

But, that God, in his sovereign wisdom and grace, has been pleased to make mention of children in his covenant with his church, I certainly do believe; and I trust it has been made to appear, that for this belief, I have ample and scriptural ground. I also believe, that, though none are saved, otherwise than by the sovereign grace of God in Christ; yet there are divinely instituted means, through which, ordinarily, the grace of salvation is conferred; and among these instituted means, "the faith and fidelity of parents," with respect to their children, hold a most important place.

I can, therefore, assure you, Sir, that I am far from yielding to the doctrine, that it can be of no use to give up our children to God in his instituted way, and to bring them up for him in that holy *nurture and admonition*, which he has graciously appointed.

"But," you are pleased to ask, "will any one hazard the assertion, that Isaac had any different exercises of faith for Jacob, or manifested any fidelity towards him, which he did not towards Esau. Or was it the sovereign power of God alone, that made Jacob the lot of his inheritance, rather than Esau, totally independent of either the faith or fidelity of the pious parents?" P. 265.

In reply, I take leave to ask, "Will any one hazard the assertion, that Isaac had" *not* "different exercises of faith," respecting Jacob, from what he had, respecting Esau? Or will any one undertake to say, that "the faith and fidelity of the pious parents" were *not*, in the "sovereign" purpose of God, indispensably connected with Jacob's being made an heir of the promise?

This is not the only instance, in which you have thought proper to represent the purposes and promises of God, respecting the salvation of mankind, as being in such a sense absolute, as entirely to preclude, or supersede, all conditions and means. In page 259, speaking of the gospel promise to Abraham—*In thee shall all nations be blessed*—you have these remarkable words. "This pro-

mise did not depend at all upon the obedience of Abraham, or any other creature. It was in no sense conditional. The divine veracity was pledged for its fulfilment. And whether circumcision had been instituted or not, God would, in the fulness of times, have sent his Son into the world, and would have blessed the nations in him!"

Had Abraham, then, in direct disobedience to the divine command, continued till the day of his death, among his idolatrous connexions, in Ur of the Chaldees; he would, nevertheless, have been *the father of all that believe, and in him all nations would have been blessed!*— Had he utterly refused to submit to circumcision, and not one of his posterity had ever been circumcised; yet Jehovah would have been *a God to him, and to his seed after him*; Canaan would have been given them for a possession; to them would have pertained *the adoption and the glory, and the covenants; and of them Jesus Christ would have come, a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers!* Had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and every one of their descendants, been altogether disobedient, and treated all the divine ordinances with utter contempt; still the *fulness of times* would have seasonably arrived, every preparation would have been seasonably made; and the promised Messiah would have appeared, *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people, Israel!* Nay, had not only Abraham, and all his posterity, but also every individual of the Gentile nations, been utterly disobedient to all the requirements and ordinances of God, both under the ancient dispensation, and under the present; still the divine promise—*In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*—would have been duly fulfilled! For "this promise," you say, "*did not depend at all upon the obedience of Abraham, or any other creature, and was in no sense conditional!*"

Now, Sir, I confess to you freely, I am neither an Antinomian, nor a Predestinarian of this sort. I do not believe this to be a doctrine of Scripture; but I believe it to be a doctrine, as dangerous in its tendency, as it is absurd in its principle.

In the perfect plan of infinite wisdom and grace, means and ends, antecedents and consequents, are, I believe, harmoniously arranged, and infallibly connected. In

the same divine plan, all the blessings, promised to Abraham and his seed, were, I believe, inseparably connected with his faith and obedience; and circumcision, the establishment of the church in his family, and all the ordinances and arrangements of the ancient economy, were indispensably necessary to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and the eventual extension of the blessings of his kingdom to all the nations of the earth. And I also believe, that if, by "the sovereign power of God," any of mankind are made subjects of grace, and heirs of glory; it is only in the way which infinite wisdom had before appointed; and that in no single instance will *the purpose of God, according to election, stand*, without the means which, in that purpose, were made necessary to the end.

On this principle, there is evident propriety in preaching the gospel, and beseeching men to become reconciled to God; and we have every inducement to diligence, and fidelity, in the great and interesting work. And on this same principle, the faith and fidelity of parents in covenant, with respect to their children, instead of being reproached and treated with lightness, ought ever to be considered, and inculcated, as of infinite importance.

This Letter is already drawn out to a greater length than I intended; but before I close it, a moment's attention must be given to a series of "questions," and "consequences," in the second Section of your Appendix; with which, it is manifest you were very much confused yourself, and seem to imagine that your opponents must be no less confounded.

"1. Did this promise to be a God to Abraham's seed respect his *natural* or *spiritual* seed?"

Answer. It respected all, who are *heirs according to the promise*; primarily those of his own posterity, and secondarily those of other nations. *The CHILDREN of the PROMISE are counted for the SEED.*

"2. Was this promise *absolute*, or was it *conditional*?"

Answer. As already explained, it was in one sense conditional, and in another sense absolute.

"3. What were the conditions, on which its blessings were suspended?"

Ans. Faith and obedience, or fidelity.

These concise and simple answers are sufficient, I trust, to shew, that your questions are not to us so con-

foundings, as you seem to imagine they must be; and that all, which, in connexion with them, you have thought proper to say, about "absolute promises," about "universalists" and "madness," about "Esau, Achan, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," about "Gentile unbelievers," and about "tradition," only serves, to furnish additional proof, how liable men are to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and to utter themselves at random, when they have nothing to the purpose to offer.

With respect to the subject of "southern planters and their slaves," on which you, and your brother Merrill appear to dwell with uncommon satisfaction, I have only to repeat, that although, under the present dispensation, there is *neither male nor female, neither bond nor free*; yet there are *parents and children*.*

As we are not, in order to be consistent, obliged to admit serfants upon the same footing with children; so neither are we obliged to admit baptized children to all the privileges of the gospel church. None are entitled to all the privileges of the church, but complete members; but as I have already shewn, and even as your own practice purports, something more than mere baptism is necessary to complete membership.

But "the law of the passover," you say, "makes no distinction between infants and adults." From this, Sir, I must certainly take leave to dissent. It does not appear, that infants were required to eat the passover; and, from the very nature of the case, it is evident they were not.

After careful attention to the subject, I am clearly of the opinion, that circumcised children were not required to eat the passover, until they had attained to years of understanding, and personally consented to the covenant. And in this opinion, I am supported by eminent divines, among whom are Witsius, Doddridge, and Stackhouse.

Infants may be the subjects of the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*, signified by baptism; but they cannot *discern the Lord's body*, and *commemorate his death*, in the holy supper. This single obvious remark I deem a sufficient answer to all which you have said, and to all which "the Rev. James Pierce

* See Letter, XV.

of Exon," has said, on the subject of infant communion, at the Lord's table.

Yours, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER XX.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my Two Discourses, after a general survey of the covenant, its perpetuity and provision, its privileges and duties, I had occasion to present the following statement :

“As we have sufficient evidence, that it was the practice of the apostles, pursuant to the tenor of God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed, to baptize the households of believing parents; so we have the testimony of the earliest of the Christian fathers, that this was the universal practice of the church, in the ages immediately succeeding the apostles.—For more than three thousand years, the seal of the covenant was universally applied to the children of the church, no one forbidding it.”

In support of this statement, I subjoined a note, presenting a summary view of the testimony of the primitive fathers, in which it was clearly shewn, that during the first century, and several succeeding ages, Infant Baptism was practised in the church, universally, and without contradiction, or question, as to its being of divine institution.

This point is so clear, and so amply supported, that you have neither ventured to deny, nor attempted to disprove it; but I am sorry to have occasion to say, that, imitating too closely a common practice with those, who have a bad cause to support, what you perceived you could not answer, you have attempted to ridicule.

You would have it, indeed, that “there is an ingenious obscurity in my manner of quoting the ancient fathers,” and that “an incautious reader might suppose, that they all lived in, or near, the first century, whereas the fact is they extended through four or five.”—TERTULLIAN, as I stated, was about eleven years old when POLYCARP died. “But how are we to know,” you shrewdly ask,

“when Polycarp died?”—I had just before informed you, Sir, that Polycarp was the bishop, or angel, of the church of Smyrna, to whom St. John, in the Revelation, addressed his epistle. From this I supposed it not very difficult to conclude, that his death could not have been a great many years after the death of that apostle; and, therefore, that Tertullian must have been sufficiently near to the apostolic age, to be a competent witness to what was the practice of the primitive church.

Again, Cyprian, I observed, suffered martyrdom for the christian faith, only about five years after the death of Origen. “Ah, indeed,” you exclaim, “it is presumed that every body knows when Origen died!”—I had informed you, Sir, that Origen was contemporary with Tertullian; that Tertullian was only eleven years old when Polycarp died, and was many years contemporary with Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp; and that Polycarp was the angel of the church of Smyrna, to whom John the Revelator addressed his epistle. Is there any “obscurity,” Sir, in all this? Is it not perfectly clear? Is it not plain to the lowest capacity, that there is a connected chain of testimony, from the days of the apostles to the latest of the fathers whom I quoted? Did you not, Sir, see it to be too plain to be fairly withstood, and, therefore, choose your measures accordingly?

No, Sir; it is not “absolutely incredible,” it is not even very wonderful, that “a country bishop by the name of Fidus” should have a question, whether it were not most proper “to defer the baptism of infants until the eighth day.” But “if it had” not “been the constant practice of the christiaⁿ church, from the first institution of baptism, to baptize infants;” would it not have been wonderful indeed, would it not have been “absolutely incredible,” that in a council consisting of sixty six bishops, only about 150 years after the apostles, such a question as Fidus proposed should have been unanimously answered, without the least question, or doubt, whether Infant Baptism were of divine institution?

Whatever might have been the peculiar sentiments of Origen, or of Gregory, they were unquestionably competent witnesses to a well known matter of fact; and their testimony is not to be set aside by any such suggestions as you are pleased to throw out.

On the whole, Sir, had you passed over my note, on

the testimony of the primitive fathers, in total silence, it would not have been so manifest, as it now is, that you felt its force, and perceived that it could not be invalidated.

But though *you* have not ventured to deny, or attempted to disprove, what I stated on the subject of primitive practice; your friend and brother, Mr. Merrill, who is so very unhappy as not to distinguish between argument and assertion, between fact and mere figment, nor between truth and falsehood, has been more adventurous. In his own manner, he has undertaken to assert, that, in my statement, "there is not so much as a shadow of truth!" that in my note, "the spirit of Antichrist appears to have done its utmost in spreading, perhaps, the last blind over the minds of God's people!" and that "a greater stretch of misrepresentation and groundless assertion perhaps never escaped the pen of man!"*—Now all this, Sir, no doubt, was intended to be very terrible; but for some reason or other, it does not disturb me at all. I pity the man, who can write at this rate.

"A volume of testimonies," Mr. M. affirms, "in direct contradiction to what he, (Mr. Worcester) asserts, might be easily produced."—But what are the testimonies, which he thinks proper to select?

The first thing, which he adduces, is to this effect; that "St. or rather Sinful Austin," (it is his own phrase) "in the year 596 came into England, with about forty of his *papistical* associates," (this, again, is his own phrase) and required, that the British christians should embrace the ceremonies of the church of Rome, particularly in the time of keeping Easter, and in baptizing their children." From this Mr. Merrill concludes, that, before that time, Infant Baptism had not been practised in the "British church."†

More than a hundred years ago, this same thing was alledged by an English antipedobaptist by the name of Danvers, and it was afterwards conclusively answered by Dr. Wall. The simple truth appears to be this: Bede, who, in the year 731, wrote the church history of the British nation, related, that when Austin came into England, finding that the Britons held to some rites and traditions, peculiar to themselves, made a proposal to

* Letters occasioned &c. p. 56.

† Ibid. p. p. 51. 52.

them, in which, among other things, he required, that they should "keep Easter at the right time. and perform the office of baptizing, according to the custom of the Roman and apostolic church."* In one edition of Fabian's Chronicle, written about the year 1500, the account of this matter, taken from Bede, agrees with the account which Bede himself had given. "Then he (Austin) sayed to them," says Fabian, "Assent ye to me especialy in thre thyngs. The first is, that ye kepe Esterday in due fourme and tyme, as it is ordeyned. The second, that ye give Christendom to the children in the manner that is used in the chyrche of Rome. And the thyrd, that ye preche unto the Anglis the word of God." But in another edition of this same Chronicle, the words—"in the manner that is used in the chyrche of Rome"—are omitted; and the proposal stands thus, *That ye give christendom to the children.*†

This incorrect statement, in the last mentioned edition of Fabian's Chronicle, has been eagerly seized by the Antipedopaptists as a proof, that Infant Baptism was not practised in the primitive British church; and is now brought forward anew, by Mr. Merrill, as a conspicuous part of his "volume of testimonies, in direct contradiction" to my statements.

But the account, as originally given by Bede, and as given in the more correct edition of Fabian, affords nothing in your favour. It was not that the Britons should baptize their children, (for this they had been in the practice of doing before,) but that they should baptize them "according to the custom of the apostolic church," that Austin proposed. And it is particularly to be remembered, that this same Austin, as well as Pelagius, who was born in Britain, expressly testifies, that he "never read or heard of any Christian, either catholic or sectary, who denied Infant Baptism." So clear it is, that the primitive British church, as well as all other churches in the primitive ages, uniformly practised the baptism of their children.

Mr. Merrill next brings forward Salmasius and Suicerus, as saying, that "in the two first centuries, no one

* Bedæ Eccl. Hist. L. 2. c. 2.—This was before the church of Rome became papistical.

† Wall's Hist. In. Bap. B. II. Chap. 4.

Let. O.

was baptized, except being instructed in the faith, and acquainted with the doctrine of Christ, he was able to profess himself a believer." And "Johannes Bohemius," he observes, "as quoted by Mr. Andrews, says, 'It was in time past the custom to administer baptism to them that were instructed in the faith,' &c.

These testimonies, again, are noticed, and answered by Dr. Wall.* Suicerus, it appears, quoted from Salmasius; and as for Bohemius, he was one of those "authors who only serve," says the Dr. "to fill up a crowd of names, and to put an abuse upon a plain honest reader!" Have we any such, Sir, at the present day?

At most, these are only the assertions of *modern* writers, are entirely unsupported by any proofs from antiquity, and are directly contradictory to the full and explicit testimony of the primitive fathers of the church. Mr. Merrill, indeed, himself undertakes to assert, that Infant Baptism was not practised in the primitive church. But of what avail is his assertion, unless supported by substantial proof? when Austin and Pelagius, who flourished only about three hundred years after the apostles, and who were men of great reading and extensive travel, both aver, that they "never read or heard of any, who denied Infant Baptism;" and their testimony is confirmed by a cloud of witnesses of the primitive ages. Of as little avail is the unsupported assertion of Salmasius, and Bohemius, and a hundred modern writers.

It is important, Sir, to be well considered, that, for facts of ancient date, we are not to rely on the unsupported authority of modern names. Let Mr. Merrill, let any other person, adduce the testimony of any of the primitive fathers, that Infant Baptism was not in use in the primitive church, and I pledge myself to give it the most serious and candid attention. But such testimony, Sir, has never been adduced, and, I am confident, never can be.

Mr. M. after many other antipedobaptist writers, has thought proper to bring forward Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Austin, as instances of persons born of Christian parents, yet not baptized in infancy; and thence concludes that their parents were

* Wall's Hist. In. Bap. B. II. Chap. 2.

antipedobaptists. Alas! to what mere shadows will a man not resort, when he has no solid arguments of which to avail himself. Of Gregory, it is not certain whether his father were a heathen, at the time he was born, or not; or what was the reason why he was not baptized. With respect to Jerome, there is no evidence, that he was not baptized in his infancy. But as to Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Austin, their parents, so far as appears, were heathen, at the time they were born, and for many years afterwards.* A sufficient reason this, why they were not baptized in infancy, but no proof that their parents were antipedobaptists. Is it not, Sir, a little remarkable, that Mr. M. should attempt to make his readers believe that Austin's father was an antipedobaptist? when Austin himself declares, that he never heard of any christian who denied, "that infants were to be baptized for the remission of sins."

When I published my Two Discourses, I thought it very doubtful, whether even the Petrobrusians denied Infant Baptism. Dr. Wall, I know, supposed it probable that they did; but Perin, the historian of the Waldenses, believed that they did not. I, therefore, thought myself warranted to state, that it was not until *twelve* or *fifteen* hundred years after Christ, that any forbade the seal of the covenant to the infant seed of the church. And whether the Petrobrusians, who did not flourish until about the middle of the *twelfth* century, denied Infant Baptism, or not, Mr. M. cites them in vain, to disprove my general statement.

But "if no one forbade the baptism of new born infants, how came it to pass," says Mr. Merrill, "that Augustine, in the fourth century, warned his readers and hearers to beware of the baptists and the antipedobaptists of his day." Let Mr. M. Sir, shew that such was the fact, and I will answer his question as well as I can; but this he cannot shew. Strabo did not "fordin" Infant Baptism, nor produce any proof, that it had ever been "forbidden," neither did the council of Carthage.

Thus, Sir, I have considered Mr. Merrill's "volume of testimonies," and feel no reluctance to submit the whole to the judgment of a discerning public. Not content, however, with merely exhibiting his own testimo-

* Wall's Hist. In. Bap. P. II. C. iii.

nies, Mr. M. undertakes to invalidate the testimonies of the primitive fathers, by which my positions were supported; and it is not a little amusing to observe with what dexterity he proceeds in his purpose,

"In the writings of the first century, we have the best evidence," he says, "which the circumstances of the case admit, that Infant Baptism was then unknown."—What is this evidence? Merely to this effect, that of *adults*, previous to their being baptized, a profession was required of repentance and faith!—This, Sir, no one disputes; but what is this to the point? Do not we, of the pedobaptist faith, still continue in the apostolic practise. Do not we require of unbaptized *adults*, previous to their being baptized, a profession of repentance and faith? But does this prove, that we do not, according to the divine institution, also practise Infant Baptism? How long, Sir, shall we be obliged to answer, over and over again, this impertinent argument?*

"This council," says Mr. Merrill, "composed of *African* bishops" (sixty six, with the Martyr Cyprian for their president,) "is the first we read of, which explicitly admitted the *superstitious* and *antichristian* practice of Infant Baptism!"—Let Mr. M. Sir, produce a council, composed either of "*African*," or European, or Asiatic, bishops, of the primitive times, in which Infant Baptism was either "explicitly," or implicitly, *denied*, or stigmatized, as a "*superstitious, and antichristian practice*," and we will confess, that he has done something.

But the curiosity is, that Mr. Merrill should object to the testimony of the council of Carthage, because it was "composed of *African* bishops." Perhaps he supposed,

* *Impertinent argument.* If there be an apparent harshness in this expression, it will find, I trust, an apology in the subject, to which it applies. The argument, here in question, is the very same with that, which is pretendedly brought from the *sacred* history. In its simple form, it is no more, nor less, than this: 'It was required of *adults*, who had never received baptism, that they should *repent*, or *believe*, and be baptized; therefore, infants were not to be baptized!' Now, I ask candidly, whether a weaker, more illogical, or more impertinent, argument, was ever employed for the support of any serious cause? Yet this is the argument, on which antipedobaptism depends for its principal support; and though it has been a thousand times exploded, it is still urged, with as much assurance as if it had the greatest solidity.

that, because they lived in Africa, they must certainly have been black; and, therefore, could have no knowledge of divine institutions, or of the practice of the christian church. At any rate, I can see no other, or better, reason for his objecting to their testimony.—Throughout his book, however, Mr. Merrill represents Infant Baptism, as a doctrine of the church of Rome.—Does he suppose, that Rome was in Africa?

In reply to the direct testimony of Austin and Pelagius, that Infant Baptism was in their day, and had been from the days of the apostles, the universal practice of the christian church, Mr. Merrill appears to have put forth his whole strength. With respect to Pelagius he says:

“1. The whole of this, so far as it has any formidableness, *may be a forgery!*”—So then, it is only for Mr. Merrill to say of a piece of ancient writing, “*It may be a forgery.*” and we must all consider it “a forgery,” and set it down for nought!

“2. It is but the assertion of *one man!*”—We never supposed, Sir, that Pelagius was more than one man. But unfortunately for Mr. M. and for the antipedobaptist cause, the testimony of this one man is amply supported by the concurrent testimony of many others.

“3. This one man does not assert, that there is none who denies Infant Baptism; but that he has heard of none!”—We must conclude, then, that Pelagius was an honest and prudent man; so far, at least, as not to assert further than he knew, or could prove. But this, it appears, Mr. Merrill considers a great disparagement of his testimony!

“4. The visible church of Christ was, at this time, hidden in the place, which God had prepared for her; and little or nothing was now seen, or heard, of the *true gospel church*, in what was called the Christian world; but the church of *Antichrist*” (that is the church which held to Infant Baptism) “was in high repute!”—So then, in about three hundred years after the apostles, the true church of God was so far lost, or hidden, from the world, that neither the learned Pelagius, nor Austin, ever knew, or heard any thing about it!—But about this same church and its primitive state and practice, Mr. Merrill, who flourishes fourteen hundred years after them, is perfectly well informed!

"As to what Austin says," continues Mr. M. "*Infant Baptism the whole church practises; it was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use, we answer—*

"1. That he had respect to the church of *Antichrist*, which alone was in reputation in his day."—The church of Antichrist, to be sure, because it held to Infant Baptism. But that no other church "was in reputation" in the primitive times, but that which held to Infant Baptism, we readily admit.

"2. As to Austin's saying, 'Infant Baptism was *ever in use,*' we NEED only observe, if Austin thus said, he made a large mistake!"—Yes, Sir, we must, doubtless, admit, that Austin, who lived within three hundred years of the apostles, "made a large mistake," about the primitive practice of the church; for Mr. Merrill, who lives only about fourteen hundred years later, says, that he did; and this is all which "*needed*" to be done, in order to put the matter beyond all question!

Such, Sir, is the manner in which Mr. Merrill can dispose of the most positive, and well authenticated, testimony of the primitive fathers. As we must, in charity, consider him an honest, and well meaning man, who would not, for the world, designedly impose upon the public; we must certainly conclude, that he really supposed his remarks to be neither false, nor ignorant, nor impertinent, nor vain, nor puerile; but such as ought without fail, to convince, and edify, every reasonable being. Such, also, they are doubtless supposed to be, by his antipedobaptist admirers; among whom, as you have given us to understand, you are not unwilling yourself to be numbered. And for myself, Sir, I should deem it a most ungenerous and felonious thing indeed, for any one to attempt to detract from any of Mr. Merrill's writings the smallest particle of real merit.

It is however, no small satisfaction to me, that my statements, with respect to the primitive practice of the church, not only have not, either by yourself, or Mr. Merrill, been shewn to be, in the least point, incorrect; but by Dr. Reed, in his late excellent work, and by others, have been abundantly supported and confirmed. My statements, most certainly, were not made at random, but were the result of deliberate and diligent research; and on a deliberate and diligent review of the

subject, I am more and more settled in the persuasion of their substantial correctness.

With due respect, I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

AS it was not the design of my Two Discourses, so neither does it fall within the plan of these Letters, to exhibit, *at large*, the evidences of Infant Baptism. God's everlasting covenant with his church is my subject; and upon this subject I have prescribed to myself principally to dwell. But as Infant Baptism is intimately connected with the covenant, I have been unavoidably led to give it some attention; and shall, in this Letter, take leave to present, in one connected, but very compendious, view, the grounds on which it rests.

I. In God's covenant with his church, children are expressly connected with their parents; and on the ground of this connexion, it has been divinely instituted, that parents should have the initiating seal administered to their infant seed.

Hence, as God's everlasting covenant is still in force, and as his special institution, respecting the infant seed of the church, has never been annulled; it is clearly a duty, as solemnly binding on parents now, as anciently it was, believingly to devote their offspring to God, and obediently to have his appointed seal put upon them.—This argument, or rather this great and practical truth, which I have had occasion to illustrate more at large in my Two Discourses, and some preceding Letters,* is certainly, in my view, too plain and too important, to be treated with lightness.

II. Not only is there no intimation, in the scriptures, that the covenant connexion between parents and children, has been dissolved; but we are very clearly taught

* See, particularly, Letter XVII.

that this important connexion was to continue, under the present dispensation.

In a memorable prophecy of Gospel days, Jehovah was graciously pleased to say, respecting his covenant people, *Their children also shall be as AFORETIME, and their congregation shall be established before me.** *Aforetime*, undeniably, the children of God's people were connected in his covenant with their parents; and were distinguished by the sacred token and seal, which he was graciously pleased to appoint for the purpose. But here we are expressly assured, that under the Gospel dispensation, THEIR CHILDREN SHALL BE AS AFORETIME.— Now, Sir, give me leave to ask, do not your antipædobaptist principles and practice, which utterly exclude children from all relation to the covenant, and its sacred seal, go directly in the face of this gracious and explicit declaration of God?

As the children of God's people are to be now *as aforetime*; so it is particularly to be observed, that in this way, *their congregation, or church, † is to be established.* Accordingly it is further said, *They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, FOR THE GOOD OF THEM, AND OF THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM. ‡* These again are, unquestionably, prophecies and promises, respecting Gospel days; and the obvious import of them is, that the covenant connexion of children with their parents was to remain *as aforetime*; and that, in the way of this connexion, the church was to be continued, and established, to the latest generations.

Agreeably to this, John, the harbinger of the Messiah, was especially commissioned *to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, as the grand and appointed way *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*, under his new dispensation, then to be introduced. §

* Jer. xxx. 20.

† The Hebrew word, in the Old Testament, rendered *congregation*, is of the same signification with the Greek word, in the New Testament, which is rendered *church*.

‡ Isa. lxxv. 23. Jer. xxxii. 39.

§ Mal. iii. 6. Luke i. 17.

When the Messiah was come, and was engaged in his public ministry, that he might *confirm the promises* before given, respecting children, and repel every suggestion, that they were no longer to be considered as having any sacred relation to his covenant and church; on a memorable occasion, he solemnly rebuked his disciples, and said, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.** We do not suppose, that the little children were brought to Christ for baptism; for Christian baptism, as a seal of the covenant in the place of circumcision, had not then been instituted, nor was it, until after Christ's resurrection. But we say, that Christ explicitly recognized the relation of the little children of his people to the kingdom of heaven, or to the church under the gospel dispensation. And I ask you, Sir, if the infant seed of believers, under the present dispensation, have no connexion with the church; what did the Saviour mean, when he so explicitly declared, *of such is the kingdom of heaven?†*

This relation of children, thus recognized by Christ, was solemnly adverted to, and insisted on, by the apostle Peter, on the illustrious day of Pentecost. *For, says he, the promise is to you, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.‡*

Upon this same relation, the apostle Paul, also, repeatedly insists. *If the first fruit, says he, be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.§* In this he has primary reference to Abraham and his natural descendants; but he applies the principle to gospel days. And in perfect coincidence with this, he further says, *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; ELSE WERE YOUR CHILDREN UNCLEAN, BUT NOW ARE THEY HOLY.||* We know that by holiness here cannot be intended real, positive, internal holiness; for Abraham did not communicate this, either to his natural descendants, or to his spiritual children; nor can any parent, to whatever degree his faith is increased, communicate grace to his children. But by virtue of

* Mat. xix. 14. Mark x. 14. Luke xviii. 16.

† Those, of whom he thus spoke, were certainly infants in age.

‡ Acts ii. 39.

§ Rom. xi. 16.

|| 1 Cor. vii. 14.

their relation to Abraham, his descendants were considered as being, in a federal, or covenant, sense, *holy*, and were entitled to the sacred sign of relationship to God and his church. And by virtue of a similar relation to their parents, the children of God's people, under the present dispensation, are to be considered as *holy*, in the same federal, or covenant, sense, and as having the same right to the sacred sign and seal. Less than this the Apostle cannot mean, when he speaks of *branches* being *holy*, because of their connexion with a *holy root*; of *children* being *holy*, because of their relation to *sanctified parents*.*

This covenant connexion of children with their parents, in the church of God, is also clearly implied by the Apostle, when he assures us, that the believing Gentiles are *ingrafted into the same olive tree*, from which the unbelieving Jews were *broken off*; and are made *fellow-heirs*, AND OF THE SAME BODY, and *partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*. For if believing Gentiles are ingrafted into the *same stock*, and made *fellow-heirs*, and of the *same body*, with God's ancient people; then their children, it is clear, must be as *aforetime*, having the same relation to the church, and entitled to equal privileges.

Indeed, throughout the New Testament, as well as the old, the holy relation of children to the church, and consequently their right to the sacred sign and seal, are clearly recognized, and holden in view, as the ground of correspondent duty and hope.

III. As we are clearly informed, that the relation of children to the church was to continue under the present dispensation, so we have evidence sufficiently clear, that, by the apostles, children were baptized.

Christ's commission to his apostles was, *Go, and teach, or disciple, all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching*

* To pretend, that the terms, *unclean*, and *holy*, in the passage here referred to, mean *illegitimate* and *legitimate*, is but a poor evasion. "The terms (*akathartos*) *unclean*, and (*hagios*) *holy* occur almost numberless times in the *Seventy*, and in the New Testament; but I do not find, that they are ever once used to signify *illegitimate* and *legitimate*, which is the sense that some would here put upon them." Guise on the place.

them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.

With evident reference to baptism, as a sacred rite, significant of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; it was prophetically said of the Messiah, *So shall he sprinkle many NATIONS.* Accordingly, in his commission to his apostles, his direction was, that *all NATIONS* should be *baptized*. Already have both the prophecy, and the commission, been in part fulfilled. Already have some of *many*, perhaps of *all, nations*, infants as well as adults, been *sprinkled, or baptized*. And the glorious day is at hand, when not only to a part, but even to the whole, of *all nations*, the sacred seal will be applied, and they will all be holiness to the Lord. But as children constitute a part of every nation, when *all nations* shall be sprinkled, or baptized, and the Lord shall give them one heart, and one way, to fear him forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them, children, we may be sure, will all be baptized.

From this part of their commission, then, it is plain, that the apostles were authorized, and enjoined, to baptize children.

Under the ancient dispensation, not only were the Jewish children circumcised; but when proselytes from other nations were admitted to the church, the children, as well as their parents, were always baptized. From this, again, it is plain, that when the apostles received their commission to baptize *all nations*, they must have understood it as extending to children.

Moreover, Christ had before expressly declared to the apostles, that *little children* were to be considered as having still a sacred relation to the church; that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*; and, therefore, had solemnly commanded them, *to suffer little children to come, or to be brought,* unto him*. This, therefore, they were to *teach all nations to observe*; for they were to *teach them to observe all things, whatsoever* their divine Master had commanded them.

Accordingly we are expressly informed, that, in fulfilment of their commission, the apostles actually baptized, not only believing parents, who had never before

* The little children were brought to him.

been baptized, but also their households. When Lydia believed, she was baptized, *and her household*; when the jailor believed, he was baptized, *and all his straightway*; and *the household of Stephanus*, as well as himself, were also baptized.

IV. As Infant Baptism was practised by the apostles, in pursuance of their commission; so it appears, from the most authentic testimony, that it was practised in the church, universally, for many ages after them.

My limits will not allow me, neither is it necessary, to give a full recital of the testimony of the fathers. But after a careful attention to the subject, I feel myself safe, in stating the following positions as correct, and capable of substantial proof.

1. In the first ages after Christ, *baptism* and *regeneration* were considered as the same thing.

This is a position, to which Dr. Wall has brought the most ample proof; and which none, I believe, who are conversant with the primitive writings, will undertake to deny.

It is not to be understood, that the primitive fathers held to no other *regeneration*, than that by *water*. They, as well as the orthodox moderns, believed in both an internal, and external, washing, or cleansing; an internal cleansing by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and an external cleansing by the application of water; and the latter they held to be symbolical of the former. But the external cleansing, as well as the internal, they called regeneration; and hence customarily spoke of persons, when baptized with water, as being regenerated.*

To this manner of speaking, they appear to have been led, by the memorable words of the Saviour to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit; he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; words, on which they insisted much, and of which they made abundant use. By being *born of water*, they understood being *baptized with water*; as by being *born of the Spirit*, they understood being *baptized with the Spirit*: and, therefore, they applied the terms *regeneration*, *regenerated*, and *being born again*, as well to the external cleansing by the wash-

* This primitive mode of speaking the Church of England still retains.

ing of water, as to the internal cleansing by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Quotations from the fathers, to this purpose, might be adduced without number; but a single passage of the apostolical Justin Martyr, taken from his first Apology to the emperor Antoninus Pius, may suffice. Speaking of such as were baptized into the Christian faith, he says, "They are *regenerated*, by the same way, by which we were *regenerated*; for they are *washed with water*, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of all things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ says, *Unless ye be regenerated, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

But as the primitive fathers understood, that none could belong to the kingdom of heaven, unless baptized, or regenerated, with water, as well as by the Spirit; and as they also understood Christ to have given assurance, that *little children* (in Luke, *ta brephe, infants*) might belong to the kingdom of heaven; it is unavoidable to conclude, that they must have held to Infant Baptism. For if none can belong to the kingdom of heaven, but such as are baptized, and yet infants may belong to the kingdom of heaven; then infants certainly may be baptized, or, as expressed by the fathers, *regenerated*.

Accordingly Ireneus, of the age immediately succeeding the apostles, speaking of Christ says; "He came to save all persons by himself; all, I mean, who are by him *regenerated* (or *baptized*) unto God; *Infants*, and *little ones*, and children, and youths, and elder persons. Therefore he went through the several ages; for *infants*, being made an infant, that he might sanctify infants; to *little ones*, he was made a little one, &c."* And in perfect consent with this is the language of the primitive fathers generally.

2. The primitive church held baptism to have come in the place of circumcision.—This again is a point too clear to be contested.

In his Dialogue with Tryphon, Justin Martyr says, "We also, who by him have had access to God, have not received this carnal *circumcision*, but the spiritual *circumcision*; and we have received it by *baptism*, by the mercy of God, because we were sinners; It is allowed

* Ireneus against Heresies, B. ii, Chap. 39.

to all persons to receive it by the same way." "A Jew," says Basil, "does not delay circumcision, because of the threatening, that every soul that is not circumcised the eighth day shall be cut off from his people; and dost thou put off the *circumcision made without hands*, in the putting off the flesh, *which is performed in baptism*, when thou hearest our Lord himself say, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except one be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*"—"Our *circumcision*, I mean the *grace of baptism*," says Chrysostom, "gives cure without pain, and procures to us a thousand benefits. And it has no determinate time, as that (the ancient circumcision) had; but one that is in the very *beginning* of his age, or one that is in the middle of it, or one that is in his old age, may receive *this circumcision, made without hands.*"

From these testimonies, (and with these the fathers all concur) it is decisively clear, that they held *baptism* to have come in the place of *circumcision*; and that they understood this to be taught by the apostle, in Col. ii. 11. a passage, which, in my sixteenth Letter, I adduced for this very purpose, and to which Basil and Chrysostom both particularly refer.

But if the fathers held baptism to have come in the place of circumcision; then, undoubtedly they held it proper and important to be administered to infants. Accordingly, to receive circumcision by baptism, Justin says, "*is allowed to all persons,*" infants as well as adults. And if a Jew did not dare to delay the circumcision of his children; "dost thou," says Basil, "put off the *circumcision*,—which is performed by *baptism!*" And according to Chrysostom, this *christian circumcision*, or *baptism*, "*one that is in the very beginning of his age may receive.*"—This proof, Sir, is strong.

3. The earliest direct testimonies, which we have on the subject are clear, and decisive, that Infant Baptism was uniformly practised in the church in the Apostle's days, and downwards for many ages.

For many years after Christ, as there was no dispute about Infant Baptism, the evidences which we have of the practice of the church, in this particular, is rather incidental and indirect. Incidental, however, and indirect as it is, the evidence, as already shewn, is clear and strong; and is altogether in favor of Infant Baptism, as

the universal practice of the primitive church. But on the first occasion for the purpose, the testimonies afforded were direct and decisive.

About a hundred years after the apostles, Origen had occasion expressly to speak of Infant Baptism as having been handed down from the apostles, and as a conclusive proof of original sin.*

At Carthage, about 150 years after the apostles, the question was submitted to a council of sixty six bishops, 'Whether the Baptism of infants ought to be deferred until the eighth day.' To this, without the least question as to the right of infants to be baptized, it was unanimously answered, that their baptism ought not to be deferred.

About 300 years after the apostles, the testimonies furnished by the Pelagian controversy are full and invincible. Against Pelagius and his adherents, who denied the doctrine of original sin, the doctrine of Infant Baptism was constantly and victoriously urged, by all the orthodox fathers, with Austin at their head. "Why are *infants* baptised for the remission of sins," says Austin, "if they have none.—*Infant Baptism the whole Church practises; it was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use.*" With this argument the Pelagians were constantly pressed by Austin, and Jerome, and all the orthodox fathers.—But how did the Pelagians get rid of its pressure.—Did they deny the fact? Did they alledge that Infant Baptism was not a divine institution; was not an apostolic practice, but a mere human invention?—No, Sir: but Pelagius himself, that he might effectually repel the suggestion that he would deny Infant Baptism, frankly conceded to the correctness of Austin's statement, and affirmed, "*that he never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants.*" And in this his adherents all concurred.

Though this controversy continued long, was agitated with great zeal, and engaged on both sides, the greatest talents and learning of the age; yet no one pretended that Infant Baptism was not a doctrine of the apostles: but on the one side it was constantly urged, and on the other as constantly conceded, that it had always been the uniform practice of the church.

* See note, p. 57 of my Two Discourses.

This evidence is so full, so clear, and direct, as to have constrained the acknowledgement, on all hands, that, at the period now in view, Infant Baptism was universally in use ; and had been, for so long a time, that the best informed men of the age had no idea that it had ever been otherwise. But let it be remembered, Sir, this was only about 300 years after the apostles.

It is now about 300 years since the reformation from Popery, under Luther and Calvin. But where is there a man of any knowledge, who does not know, whether the fathers of the reformation held, or not, to the baptism of infants ? Is it then to be supposed, that, within 300 years after the apostles, the whole church should have swerved from the apostolic practice, in this particular ; and this, too, in so silent a manner, that the best informed ministers of the church, both orthodox and heterodox, were totally unapprised of the change ? To believe this, Sir, must certainly require the utmost stretch of sectarian credulity.

Undoubtedly, if the baptism of infants was not authorized by the apostles, it could never have been introduced into the church, without vehement struggles and disputes. But no such struggles and disputes, on this subject, were known in the primitive ages. The practice universally obtained in the church ; and for several of the first centuries, not a single person appears to have disputed its divine original.

Tertullian, indeed, about the commencement of the third century, and Gregory Nazianzen, about 150 years after him, for some strange reasons, entertained the opinion, that, in ordinary cases, it would be better if baptism were deferred.* But they both held that in case of

*Gregory thought best to defer it until infants were three years old ; and Tertullian, until *after they were married* ! That Tertullian should hold an opinion so singular, was not very surprising, as he was a man of a peculiarly whimsical mind ; fell into the error of the *Montanists*, who held that one Monanus was that Paraclete, or Comforter, whom the Saviour had promised ; and that better and fuller discoveries were made to him than had been made to the apostles ; and finally was ejected from the communion of the church. Yet this man, merely because he advised to *defer* baptism, is by the antipedobaptists, accounted of sufficient authority, to place in opposition to the whole body of the fathers. His *testimony*, however, is clearly in our favor.

sickness, and danger of death, children should be baptized without delay; both of them spoke on the subject as if Infant Baptism was universally practised in the church; and neither of them disputed its having been thus practised, even from the days of the apostles. Of these men, therefore, it is particularly to be observed, that though their *opinions* were singular; their *testimony*, with respect to the practice of the church, was perfectly concurrent with that of all the other fathers.

That the clear and direct testimony, now adduced; may, with the utmost confidence, be relied on as correct, is further evident from this important fact; that catalogues of all the primitive sects of professing christians were early written, and are still extant; but in none of those catalogues is there any mention of any who denied baptism to infants. The writers were Ireneus, Epiphanius, Philastrius, Austin, and Theodoret.*

Ireneus, who, about twenty years after the death of St. John, was a hearer of Polycarp at Smyrna, and afterwards was bishop of Lyons in France, wrote his treatise concerning Sects about 76 years after the apostles. In this treatise he mentions, professedly, all the sects which arose in the time of the apostles, and which had sprung up in the seventy six years after their death.

Epiphanius, Philastruis, and Austin, all wrote their respective catalogues, in a period, from about 270 to 290 years after the apostles. The sects enumerated by Epiphanius amounted to 80, which he said were all he had ever heard of in the world; Austin, who wrote a little later, mentions 88; and Philastrius, who made a difference of opinion about any trifling matter a heresy, gives the number of different sects at 100.

Theodoret's account of heresies was written after the apostles, about 330 years; and is very learned, methodical, particular, and full.

In all these several catalogues, the differences of opinion which obtained in the primitive ages, respecting baptism. are particularly recounted, and minutely designated. Some sects are mentioned, as the Valentinians, the Manichees, &c. who made no use of water baptism for any, either infants, or adults; and the different forms

* Wall's Hist. In. Bap. P. I. Chap. xxi.
Let. Q.

and ways, in which baptism was administered by different sects, are distinctly described.

But in no one of these catalogues is there to be found the least intimation of any, (except such as denied water baptism altogether,) who did not hold to the baptism of infants as a divine institution.

Now, Sir, what proof could be more satisfactory than this? What evidence more clear, or more direct, could we have, that Infant Baptism was practised in the church, universally, from the days of the apostles, down the lapse of many succeeding ages? And in view of this proof, of how little weight are the unsupported assertions of Walefred Strabo, Ludovicus Vives, Salmasius, Bohemius, or any *modern* writers? Of how little weight all the shadowy things, which are said to perplex the minds of the unlearned, and to divert their attention from solid argument and fact?

In this *summary* view, many collateral and detached proofs of Infant Baptism are necessarily omitted. But the evidences now exhibited, are such as I deem connected, clear, and conclusive; especially as there is no argument, of the least solidity, to be opposed to them.

Upon the ground of these evidences, therefore, I feel myself strong; and can hear, undismayed, all the vehement declamations, censures, and anathemas of Antipedobaptism. Yes, Sir; undismayed, and unmoved, I can hear myself called a bigotted *judaiser*, an abetter of *Antichrist*, an adherent of *the beast*, a *liar* and *deceiver*, and all the opprobrious names, which Mr. Merrill, and his zealous partizans, have thought proper so liberally to bestow upon me.

Yours, dear Sir, &c.

* * *

LETTER XXII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

Of the substantial correctness of my statements and remarks, in my Discourses, relative to the *mode* of baptism, I am fully persuaded; nor are they in the least degree invalidated, by any thing which you have thought proper

to offer in opposition to them. Some things, however, in this part of your Strictures, ought not, perhaps, to pass, without some notice. But here, I must be as brief as possible, as my Letters are already extended to a greater length, than I at first contemplated.

With reference to the *mode* of baptism, I had occasion to state, that 'THE question properly between us is not this, Whether any were baptized, in the days of Christ and his apostles, by immersion; but it is precisely this, Whether immersion, or dipping, be the *only* valid mode of baptism.'—Upon this you have thought proper to observe: "By this it will be seen, that if it be not A question between us and them, whether some were baptized, in the days of Christ and his apostles, by immersion, then it must be a *conceded* point, that there were some immersed at that period." And you afterwards proceed as if I had made such a *concession*. P. 306.

Now, Sir, were I only to intimate, that you do not know the logical difference between *THE question*, and *A question*, would you not be offended? But if you do know this difference, how is it to be accounted for, that, in the present instance, you should not observe it. Is it possible, that you would purposely take advantage of the supposed ignorance, or credulity, of your readers?

I did, indeed, say, 'THE question, properly between us, is not, Whether any were baptized, in the days of Christ and his apostles, by immersion, or dipping:' for this, certainly, is not the question, on which our dispute turns. But I did not say, this is not A *question* between us. I did not *concede*, that some, in the days of Christ and his apostles, were baptized by immersion. But I said, and I now repeat it, that could it even be proved, *as, however, it CANNOT*, that some were baptized, in the apostles days, by immersion; it would avail nothing against our practice; unless it could also be proved, that *none* were baptized in any other way.—But this you thought convenient to represent as a contradiction.—Is not this, Sir, getting along, at a miserable rate?

Another statement, which I had occasion to make, was as follows: 'It is, however, a well supported fact, that, in the first ages of christianity, and for twelve or fifteen hundred years afterwards, baptism by sprinkling, or affusion, was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid. . Even those, who, in ordinary cases, baptized by

immersion, did not deny, but admitted, the validity of baptism by sprinkling, or affusion.' Upon this you have been pleased to observe: "The reader will here notice another *full and fair concession*, that the manner of baptizing was, *in ordinary cases, by immersion.*" And again: "Mr. Worcester has *conceded*, not only implicitly, but in direct terms, that *immersion* was the *ancient ordinary mode.*"

Now, Sir, let it be supposed, that you had somewhere had occasion to say, 'Formerly, even those of the antipedobaptists, who, *in ordinary cases*, baptized by sprinkling, did not deny, but admitted, the validity of baptism by immersion.' Were a school boy, only ten years old, so grossly to mistake, misconstrue, or misrepresent, your words, as to say, 'Dr. Baldwin has made a *full and fair concession*, that, formerly, the antipedobaptists, *in ordinary cases*, baptized by sprinkling;' would you not think him to deserve a severe reprimand?—I submit the question, Sir, to your conscience; for the cases are similar.

No, Sir, I have made no such *concession*, as you have thought it convenient to assume. I did not say, that, in the first ages of christianity, "the manner of baptizing was, *in ordinary cases, by immersion.*" Nor that *immersion was the ancient ordinary mode.*" But I said that 'in the first ages of christianity, those, (however many or few) who, *in ordinary cases*, baptized by immersion, did not deny, but admitted, the validity of baptism by sprinkling, or affusion.' And on the correctness of this statement, Sir, I still feel myself warranted to insist.

In page 311 you have presented, in one view, what you wish to have considered as my "*concessions*," and "*contradictions*," the principal of which are those, on which I have now remarked; and immediately afterwards, you have made an essay towards an attempt to make out another "*inconsistency*" in my statements. But as your readers, I trust, generally, however it may be with yourself, will readily perceive, that, without any "*inconsistency*," a writer may speak of a thing as proved '*by fair implication*,' where he acknowledges the proof is not "*direct*;" any further attention to this part of your strictures, would, probably, be deemed a reprehensible waste. But will you pardon me, Sir, if I take leave to observe, in the general, with respect to this seventh section of your Appendix, that I cannot but think that on a

serious review of it, you will see abundant reason for regret, that you suffered it to go so hastily to the press.

The proof Sir, which in my Discourses I exhibited, that immersion is not the only authorised mode of baptism ; but that sprinkling, or affusion, is, at least, equally scriptural and valid ; I must still be allowed to consider as solid and conclusive. But in confirmation of this, and in opposition to the assertions, not only of yourself but of antipedobaptists in general ; narrow as my present limits are, it may not be improper to present the following plain and concise statements, which I seriously and candidly believe to be correct, and capable of solid support.

1. The Greek words, *baptizo*, *baptismos*, &c. rendered *baptize*, and *baptism*, do not necessarily, nor primarily, signify immersion, any more than affusion or sprinkling.

Baptizo is a derivative from *bapto*. But in the Greek language, it is a general principle, or rule, that derivatives in *izo* are not limited to the original meaning of their primitives ; but have uniformly a secondary, consequential, and extended meaning. *Wetting*, *washing*, or *cleansing*, is a consequence of *dipping*. If, then, *bapto*, signifies to *dip*, or *immerse* ; the consequential and proper meaning of its derivative, *baptizo*, is to *wet*, to *wash*, or *cleanse* ; without determining at all the mode, in which the *wetting*, *washing*, or *cleansing*, is to be performed. That this is according to the analogy of the Greek language, is shewn by the soundest philological criticism, in a late publication,* by the Rev. Mr. Sweat of Sanford ; and that such is the true sense of the word, *baptizo*, has been abundantly shewn, from the best lexicographers and critics, by many writers on this subject.

Hence, had it been the intention of the Saviour, to confine his followers to dipping or immersion ; the proper word to express this ordinance would have been, not *baptizo*, but *bapto*. The constant and invariable use, therefore, of the derivative, *baptizo*, to *wet*, to *wash*, to *cleanse*, instead of the primitive *bapto*, which originally,

* Entitled "A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE MODE OF BAPTISM, &c." a publication replete with solid learning ; and in which are exposed, in a most clear and convincing light, the unsoundness and futility of the *unlearned* criticisms in favor of immersion, with which the age has been deluged.

but not *invariably*, signifies to *dip*, is, to my mind, a clear proof, that the Saviour did not intend to enjoin immersion, as the only valid mode of baptism.

2. There is no evidence that any of the baptisms, either by John the Baptist,* or by the apostles, were performed by immersion.

Their *going down to the water*, and *coming up from the water*, as expressed in the *original*; or *even into the water*, and *out of the water*, as expressed, with very doubtful correctness, in our *translation*; is certainly no proof, that either Christ, or the Ethiopian eunuch, was *immersed*. As they were abroad in the open country, it is by no means strange, that they should step down to, or even *into*, a water, near at hand, in order to be baptized, by *affusion* or *sprinkling*. And it is particularly to be observed, that it is not said, they were *dipped*, or *immersed*.

3. The circumstances, attending the baptisms, recorded in Scripture, are strongly in favor of *sprinkling*, or *affusion*, as the *mode* in which they were performed.

In the open country about Jordan, a place favorable, by reason of the plenty of water, (*polla hudata, many little streams*,) for the multitudes with their beasts; but remote from any accommodations, for changing their apparel; thousands of the Jews, from all parts of Judea, were baptized by John. Is it to be supposed, that John was in the water all the time, or even so great a part of it as he certainly must have been, had he baptized by *immersion*? Is it probable, that those multitudes, gathered from all parts of Judea, were in a situation to change their apparel, or otherwise to be *decently*† *immersed*? Do not the whole circumstances clearly indicate, that they must have been baptized, by *sprinkling*, or *affusion*?

On the day of Pentecost, three thousand from different parts of the world, were baptized by the apostles at Jerusalem. Have we any intimation, Sir, of their going to a pond, or a river? Were they, when assembled at the temple in Jerusalem, in any situation to be

* Not that John's baptism was Christian baptism.

† *Decently*. Notwithstanding your impassioned appeals on the subject of decency, the Gospel certainly requires, that *all things be done DECENTLY*. 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

immersed? Is it conceivable, that the apostles, in the short time allowed for this service,* should have baptized the whole three thousand by immersion? Do not the whole circumstances again prove, that they must have been baptized by affusion, or sprinkling?

Cornelius and his household were baptized by Peter. Is there any intimation of their going abroad for this purpose? Is there not, on the contrary, every reason to believe, that, when Peter said, *Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized*, water was immediately brought, and they were baptized in the house where they were?

At dead of night, in the city of Philippi, the *Jailer*, and all his, were baptized, by Paul and Silas. Is it to be believed, that in a city, guarded by Roman centinels, the *prisoners*, Paul and Silas, when their Jailer had received a strict charge, at his peril, to keep them safely, would, nevertheless, take him and his family abroad, in the night, just after the whole city had been roused by an earthquake, and go to a pond, or a river, to baptize them by immersion!† No, Sir; this is not to be believed, by any impartial mind.

In all these several instances, are not the circumstances clearly in favor of *sprinkling*, or *affusion*? And do they not infinitely outweigh the simple circumstances, so much insisted on by antipedobaptists, of John's *baptizing at Enon, because there was much water* (for the convenience of the multitudes with their beasts) *there*; of Christ coming up from the water, and of Philip and the eunuch going down to the water?

4. The *signification* of baptism is clearly in favor of *affusion*, or *sprinkling*.

Baptism, as, in my sixteenth Letter I had occasion to shew, signifies the renewing of the heart by the Holy Spirit. But the scripture never speaks of men, as being *dipped*, or *immersed*, in the Holy Spirit; but constantly represents the influences of the Spirit, as being *poured* or *sprinkled*, upon them; as *coming down upon them, like*

* The time could not have been more than six hours. But had all the apostles been employed, during *six hours*, less than a *minute and a half* would have been allowed for the baptism of each of the *three thousand*!

† Nothing can be more unfounded, than the idea of their being *immersed* in prison.

rain upon the mown grass, and like showers, which water the earth.

5. The references to baptism, in the different parts of scripture, are clearly in favor of *sprinkling*, or *affusion*.

Referring to gospel times, the prophet Isaiah, speaking of Christ says, *So shall he SPRINKLE many nations.* In a promise to the Jews, which was also to have its ultimate fulfilment in gospel days, Jehovah, by the mouth of Ezekiel, said : *I will SPRINKLE clean water upon them, and they shall be clean.* And in the new Testament, mankind are represented as being cleansed by the *SPRINKLING of the blood of Christ.*

Under the ancient economy, various purifications were enjoined, of which by far the greater part were by *sprinkling.* The unclean, in order to be cleansed, were to be *SPRINKLED with the water of purification* ; and almost all things were purged, or cleansed, by the *SPRINKLING of water, and of blood.* But by the apostle to the Hebrews these various purifications, or *sprinklings*, are expressly called (diaphorais baptismois) *diverse baptisms.*

When passing thro' the sea, on *dry land*, the Israelites, as we are assured, were *sprinkled*, with spray from the sea, and with rain from the cloud, which covered them. *The earth shook, the heavens, also, DROPPED at the presence of God. Thou, O God, didst send a PLENTIFUL RAIN, whereby thou didst CONFIRM thine inheritance when it was weary.* This *sprinkling with spray from the sea, and rain from the cloud*, is by the apostle to the Corinthians called a baptism. *All our fathers, says he, were BAPTIZED unto Moses, in, or by, the CLOUD and the SEA.* A decisive proof this, that *sprinkling is baptism.*

With reference to the sufferings, which he was to endure, Christ repeatedly spoke of a baptism, with which he was to be baptized. But what was that baptism ? "The sacred body of the blessed Jesus was truly, and literally baptized. He was *wet*, and *bathed*, in his own tears, and sweat, and blood, while in his agony in the garden, when scourged, and when nailed to the cross." This was the *baptism.* "Accordingly it was a common expression of the ancient fathers, concerning the martyrs,—that they were *baptized with their own blood.*" Here again is clear proof against the dogma, that immersion only is baptism.

The wonderful effusion of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, was declared by Peter to be in fulfilment of the prophecy in Joel, *I will POUR out my Spirit upon all flesh, &c.* Christ, says this apostle, *being, by the right hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath SHED FORTH this, which ye now see and hear.* Thus were they baptized by the Holy-Ghost; not immersed or dipped in the Spirit; but the Spirit *poured out, and shed forth* upon them.

Now I ask you, Sir, are not these plain references to baptism clearly in point? Are they not all decisively in favour of *sprinkling* or *affusion*, as a scriptural mode of baptism? Do they not, at least, form an argument in favour of *sprinkling*, of tenfold greater weight and solidity, than can be formed in favour of *immersion*, by the dubious phrases, *into the water, and out of the water, and buried in baptism*, on which, for a sectarian charm, such perpetual changes are rung.

What I have here exhibited is but a very summary view of the evidences of *sprinkling*, as a proper and scriptural mode of baptism. But even from this summary view, it will be seen, I trust, that the scripture through out is clearly in our favor; and therefore, that to declare, as we often hear it declared, that we have not a word of scripture for our practice, savours but very little of true christian modesty.

Yours, dear Sir, &c.



LETTER XXIII.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

Though nothing was farther from my heart, than a design to calumniate the antipedobaptists; yet I thought it my duty to give, in my Discourses, a faithful representation of some of their errors and irregularities. This I did under a high sense of responsibility, and not without a foresight, that it would draw upon me much odium and reproach. But I must confess to you, Sir, that, considering your station and character, I hardly expected, that

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my serious representations, would by you be publicly denounced, as bitter "invectives," and the effusions of a "persecuting spirit." As it is, however, I must be allowed to reply to you, upon this head, with great seriousness and plainness.—What you have chosen to call my "invectives against the baptists," you have numerically arranged, under several distinct articles.

"1. We are charged," you say, "with imbibing the error of the old *legal Jews*, by unscripturally blending the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, and what is called the Sinai covenant, together."

That you do blend these covenants, Sir, is an undeniable fact; and that in consequence of this, you are entangled in the toils of error, is what I seriously believe, and would devoutly deplore. Is it not by blending these covenants, that you are led to conclude, that because the Sinai covenant, *the law of commandments contained in ordinances, has been done away*, God's everlasting covenant with Abraham and his seed must also have been done away? This, Sir, I consider a great error, and the consequences of it I believe to be exceedingly deplorable.

"2. They deny God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace, the grand charter of the inheritance and privileges of his people, the source of blessings to all the kindreds of the earth."

This serious representation, is what you are pleased to call my second "invective;" and upon this you exclaim: "If there were any law in force to burn heretics, I know not, my brethren, how we should feel to have such a charge as this *fulminated* against us!" Such is the manner, in which you would turn the attention of your readers from a serious consideration of your error, and fix in their minds an odium against me. But this, Sir, must not avail you.

That God's covenant with Abraham and his seed is his 'everlasting covenant of superabounding grace, the grand charter of the inheritance and privileges of his people, and the source of blessings to all the kindreds of the earth,' I trust I have sufficiently shewn. But that you, and your brethren, generally, do 'deny' this covenant, utterly disavow all connexion with it, and even reproach, as "*Judaizers*" and abettors of "*Antichrist*," those who professedly adhere to it—is it not a fact as notorious, as it is solemn?

"3 They deny the church of God, which was formed in the family of Abraham, &c." This you have set down as my third "*invective*."—But "how," say you, "has Mr. Worcester proved this? How! by his own *assertion*, as he has most of his other charges."

Did you mean, Sir, to impress a belief, that my representation, in this instance, was not just? Is there any man, who will doubt, whether you do deny the church of God, which was formed in the family of Abraham, and utterly disclaim all connexion with it, as if it were unworthy even to be called a church? If so; let such an one only listen, for the shortest time, to the daily language of antipedobaptists; let him only read any antipedobaptist publication; let him only cast his eye over your book, and particularly, the third Section of your Appendix; and he will doubt no longer: but if he be a serious man, and a friend to the ancient Zion of the Holy One of Israel, his feelings will be shocked, his heart will be distressed, and he will solemnly yield to the conviction, that my representation of your error, in this instance, is neither to be treated with lightness, nor attributed to a spirit of persecution.

"4. The grand provision, which, in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make, for the preservation of a righteous seed upon the earth, and for the maintenance and promotion, from age to age, of his cause and kingdom in this hostile world, they not only deny, but openly contemn."

This, Sir, you have noted as my fourth "*invective*"; and with reference to this, you say, "This charge appears to us so totally *unfounded*, and so far from that spirit of meekness, which the love of Christ inspires, that we shall attempt no other vindication, but a solemn appeal to facts, and to the feelings of our fellow men." You then proceed, in an impassioned, (I will not say boastful) representation of the piety and zeal, the labors and self-denial, the love and success, of yourself and your brethren. But what is all this, Sir, to the purpose? Great as your piety and zeal, your labors and self-denial, your love and your success, may be; do you not, after all, utterly deny, and openly contemn, that provision, which in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make, (*by connecting children with their parents, in his everlasting covenant,*) for the preservation of a

righteous seed upon the earth, and for the maintenance and promotion, from age to age, of his cause and kingdom, in this hostile world?

That it is in the way of this covenant connexion of children with their parents, and the obligations and duties involved in it, that God has been pleased to provide for the preservation of a righteous seed, and the maintenance of his church in the world, has by this time, I trust, been sufficiently proved. And that in this way, *principally*, a righteous seed has actually been preserved, and the church of God maintained, from the earliest ages to the present, no one, I believe, who will seriously review the history of the church, will deny.

Was it not, Sir, in the line of Abraham's descendants, *principally*, that a righteous seed was preserved on the earth, from the first establishment of the covenant with him, until the Messiah came, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and *the blessing of Abraham came upon the gentiles*? Is it not a fact too plain to be contested, that since *the gentiles first became fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*; piety and all the blessings of the covenant have been transmitted from parents to children, down from generation to generation; and that in this way, *principally*, the cause and church of God have been maintained and perpetuated? And is it not an obvious and interesting fact, that of those, who, in our age and country, are hopefully brought into the kingdom of Christ, not only in the Pedobaptist connexion, but even in *your's*, a very great proportion are persons, who were publicly given up to God by their parents, and baptized in their infancy?

Yes, Sir; it is, I believe a generally acknowledged fact, that by far the better part of the members of your churches are persons, who had pedobaptist parents, and were baptized in their infancy:—persons, to whom, if indeed they be subjects of grace, God has manifested his mercy in faithfulness to his covenant; but who, nevertheless, have, by some means, been prevailed on, ungratefully to disavow that very covenant, and condemn the gracious provision made in it for their children. Affecting thought! Most earnestly, Sir, would I recommend it to your serious consideration.

God will be faithful to his covenant, and bless his own institutions, notwithstanding the contempt, with which

they are treated. Hence, it is in the neighbourhood, mostly of pedobaptist churches, that your churches flourish. You are built up with proselytes from the pedobaptist faith, and your best members are gained over from pedobaptist connexions. And I can candidly declare it my serious belief, that without pedobaptists you could not subsist;—if there were no pedobaptists, your churches would decay, and eventually become extinct.

The preaching of the gospel is certainly of vast importance. But God, though a sovereign, dispenses his grace in his own instituted way. It is, therefore, not to be expected, that, in gospelized lands, the preaching of the gospel will be attended with much success, without an observance of his other institutions, and particularly the sacred dedication, and *holy nurture*, of children, which his covenant enjoins. Were these duties, therefore, universally, neglected, the churches would decay, and eventually fail.*

Shall children, then, and young persons, be taught, and persuaded, to despise the holy covenant and ordinance of the living God? Shall parents be taught, and persuaded, to neglect the great duty to their children,

* In connexion with the above remarks, without any intention to reproach, but with the deepest concern, I would submit, for serious consideration, the following queries.

Was not the State of Rhode-Island originally settled on *anti-pedobaptist principles*? And have not those principles, there, been left to their free, and uncontrolled, operation and influence? Is it not to Rhode-Island, therefore, that we are to look for the fullest and fairest experiment of antipedobaptism, ever made in this country, or perhaps, in the world? If then, the principles of antipedobaptism were true, and scriptural; might we not reasonably look to Rhode-Island for a more general prevalence of divine knowledge, a more general and sacred observance of divine institutions, more pure and flourishing churches, and more of the spirit of primitive christianity, than is to be expected in almost any other part of the globe?

But what is the actual result of this experiment? Alas! let the forsaken and decayed houses of God—let the profaned and unacknowledged day of the Lord—let the unread and even exiled oracles of divine truth—let the neglected and despised ordinances of religion—let the dear children and youth growing up in the most deplorable ignorance of God, his word, and his sacred institutions—let the few friends of Zion, weeping in secret places, over her *desert*, her affecting, and wide-spread *desert*, around them—let the deeply impressed missionaries, who in obedience to the most urgent calls, have been sent by pedobaptist societies into different parts of the State—be allowed to testify!—If there be religion there, is it not almost wholly confined

which God requires? Shall baptized persons, whether young or old, be taught, and persuaded, to disavow and condemn the seal of God which is upon them? Shall any be taught, and persuaded, to disavow and condemn, that act of their pious parents, by which with humble faith, with fervent prayer, with tears of tenderness, devotion, and hope, they were given up to God, according to his sacred institution? Shall children, thus given up, be seductively torn away from those churches, which witnessed the solemn vows made for them, and bore a part in the tender and holy solemnities? And shall all this be done, Sir, under the imposing pretence of doing God service, and maintaining the honour of his special institutions? Alas! the deceptions which may be passed upon mankind, and even upon christians!

“5. They deny and condemn the grace, so kindly offered for the spiritual renovation, and everlasting salvation, of the seed of the church.”—This, Sir, you have put down as my fifth “*invective*.”

to those places, in which pedobaptist churches are established, and a pedobaptist influence has effect? Witness the late revivals!

But if such be the result of the fairest experiment ever made of antipedobaptist principles; what reason have we to suppose, that, were antipedobaptism to become as predominant in the other States, our country, at large, would not soon exhibit a similarly dark and dreary aspect?—In what light, then, are the friends of Zion, and the friends of humanity, to look upon the so loudly proclaimed prevalence of antipedobaptism, in this age of abounding error?

Let us not be deceived in this matter. Doubtless it is not to those places, where a pedobaptist influence prevails, that we are to look for the true character and tendency of antipedobaptism: but to those places where antipedobaptist principles are left to their own uninfluenced operation. That *zeal* which is blown into a flame, by a predominant opposite influence, may die away, and go out, when that opposite influence is no longer felt; that *engagedness in religion*, which is found necessary, while struggling for an ascendancy, may subside and disappear, when the desired ascendancy is attained; and even that *sectarian love*, which, by motives of party, is often raised to the highest ardour, and which sometimes discovers itself in demonstrations of *fondness*, to the sober mind as disgusting, as they are evidently indecent, may give place to indifference and coldness, when those motives of party cease to operate.—I appeal to facts.

In this reference to Rhode-Island, so obviously in point, and necessary to my purpose, but in which nothing is less intended than a reflection upon the State, I throw myself, frankly, upon the candor of all concerned.

After a number of observations and questions, which I am not concerned to answer, you take occasion to say, "We know of no other grace, nor can we conceive of any, which the author can have reference to, but the *grace of Infant Baptism*. We know nothing, which distinguishes the children of pedobaptists from the children of other believers, but their *baptism*."—Had I not, Sir, throughout my Discourses, spoken of the gracious promise of the Covenant respecting children? Is not the "grace" set forth in this promise something more than *baptism*? And did you not understand it, did you not "conceive" of it, as being something more?

But if the covenant contains a gracious promise respecting children, and by faith in this promise a pedobaptist believer gives up his children to God, and agreeably to his holy institution has the sacred sign and seal put upon them; is there not then an important difference between his children, and the children of an antipedobaptist, who utterly denies the promise, despises the holy institution, and presumptuously leaves his children to the "*uncovenanted mercy of God*." *

Yes, Sir, we of the pedobaptist faith, if true and faithful, indeed may "present our supplications for our children, upon a different footing from what the *bap'tists* do." We may humbly plead their dedication to God, according to his own institution; and his infinitely gracious promise in Christ, *to be a God to us, and to our children after us*. And this, Sir, let me assure you, how lightly soever by you it may be treated, will ever be esteemed by a true and faithful pedobaptist, as a privilege unspeakably, important and precious. Dear as his children are naturally to him, they will be doubly endeared by the affecting consideration, that God, his chosen portion, has condescended to speak graciously concerning them; *has spoken of his servants house, for a great while to come*.

Let me ask you, then, dear Sir, is it a small thing to be the children of such a parent? A parent, who *walks in the steps of the faith of Abraham*, and can humbly and believingly plead for them God's *covenanted mercy* in

* You speak of leaving children to the "*uncovenanted mercy of God*," as if it were even a *meritorious* thing. But are you willing, Sir, to leave yourself in this way?

Christ. Is not this something more, than to be the children of a parent, who, however faithful in other respects, yet denies and contemns the grace set forth in the covenant respecting *them*, neglects the important duty of giving them up to God in his instituted way, and thus cuts himself off from the privilege of pleading for them on *covenant ground*.

“6. The great body of God’s visible professing people, *even the most enlightened and the most faithful*, for hundreds of years, they utterly set aside, as constituting no part of the true church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist.”—This according to your notation, is my sixth “*invective* ;” and with reference to this you have been pleased to observe : “We very much regret, that Mr. Worcester should throw out such an unqualified charge, without producing a scrap of proof to support it. Can we suppose that he seriously believed this to be the sentiment of the baptists generally ?”

Yes, Sir, that the baptists generally, I mean the *close communion* baptists, do set aside the great body of God’s visible people, even the most enlightened and the most faithful, as constituting no part of the church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist, I do seriously believe ; and I should no more think of being called upon to produce proof of this, than of their holding to close communion.

But you proceed : “The writer of these sheets thinks it incumbent on him to declare, that as far as he has been able to understand the sentiments of his own denomination, both in Europe and America, they never have denied that pedobaptists were visible christians ; that *a number of them united together may be a visible church* ; and that *a minister regularly placed over them, may be a visible minister of Christ.*” P. 297.—Probably, Sir, no declaration in your whole book has more surprized and astonished your readers, both pedobaptists and antipedobaptists, than this.

Is this, Sir, the common, *every day*, language, is this consistent with the practice of your denomination “generally ?” Is it, indeed, a fact that you and your brethren, generally, do acknowledge and treat pedobaptist churches, as *churches of Christ* ?—Do you hold fellowship with them as *such*, in the sacred ordinances of Christ’s house ? Do you regard them as *such*, in your

general conduct towards them? Do you receive and recognize their members, as brethren in common, and entitled to all the privileges of the gospel?—Do you pray for the enlargement of these churches? Do you rejoice in their prosperity? *Do you seek their peace?* Do you religiously abstain from every thing, which would tend to hinder their increase, to disturb their tranquillity, or to disaffect, alienate, and turn aside their members?

Do you not, on the contrary, utterly separate yourselves from our sacred communion? But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches of Christ? Do you not practically say to our members generally, when present on your sacramental occasions, “*Stand aside; you have no part nor lot with us in this matter!*” But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches of Christ? Do you not hold yourselves at liberty indiscriminately to enter our enclosures, to seize upon our labours—upon things made ready to your hands;* and to act the bishop even with our covenanted professors; without any respect to the feelings, the character, or the pastoral rights of their ministers? But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches and ministers of Christ? Do you not hold yourselves at liberty, upon every favorable opportunity, to employ all the means in your power, to disaffect, to proselyte, and to detach from us, our members? But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches of Christ? When any of our members are, by any means prevailed on to go over to you; do you not immediately receive them, without any respect to their covenant engagements, to their church standing, or to the feelings, or privileges, either of their ministers or their brethren? But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches of Christ? Do you not, in fine, openly and before the world, call us “*Judaizers*” and a part of “*Antichrist?*”† But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us churches of Christ?

You will pardon me, Sir, this plainness, which I use with reluctance, but which you yourself have compelled? You have called on me for proof, which I can no other-

* 2 Cor. x. 12—16.

† See your own book, p. 191, and several other places. See Mr. Merrill's publication at large. In his “LETTERS” “to all that fear God,” occasioned by my Discourses, he calls us *Antichrist* more than forty times.

wise give, than by a recurrence to facts. I must, therefore, be permitted to proceed.

Was there a church of Christ at Sedgwick, before the late revolution in that place? If there was; how could you and your brethren go upon the spot, and raze that church to its foundation; set aside, as a mere nullity, all its covenant engagements, its established order, and its holy solemnities; and from its ruins erect a church, and ordain a minister, anew, as if before there had been no church, nor minister, of Christ in the place! Can you hold yourselves at liberty to rend in pieces, to break up and overturn at pleasure, *acknowledged* churches of Christ? Can you hold yourselves at liberty to set aside, and treat with utter contempt, the established order, the covenant engagements, and the most sacred solemnities, of *acknowledged* churches of Christ?*

* "Mr. Worcester," you say, "seems to be much disturbed at the proceedings of the Baptists at Sedgwick, for administering baptism, forming a church," &c. p. 139.

Though I certainly considered your "exulting" publication of the Sedgwick revolution as a piece of the same *system of proselytism*, of which your *parade* of meetings and baptisms, your unbounded blazoning of your preachers and performances, your perpetual proclamations of success and increase, and a hundred things of a similar nature, are parts; yet this was not, as you would represent it, the thing which particularly engaged my attention. But, "the proceedings at Sedgwick," I formerly adduced, and have now adduced again, as *public* proof, that you and your brethren do actually "set at nought" our ministers, our churches, and our most sacred solemnities. And in this light, Sir, however disagreeable it may be, they *must* be holden in view.

But you are pleased to ask, "Would not the Pedobaptists *exult*" a little, if a *Baptist minister, his wife, three deacons, and eighty others*, should all come over to them at once?"—To this, Sir, I answer with perfect sincerity and frankness, that should "a *Baptist minister, his wife, three deacons, and eighty others*, all come over to us at once," under circumstances similar to those, which *preceeded, accompanied, and followed*, the revolution at Sedgwick; instead of considering it a subject of "*exultation*," I should certainly, for one, consider it a just cause for the deepest *humiliation*. *SEDGWICK will not long be to you a very pleasant sound.*

But you proceed: "Has not the defection of Mr. Edwards from our sentiments been a theme of as much exultation among them?—Not only so, but has not an instance of one, who by the "overwhelming attentions of the *Baptists*," had like to have been *one*, but *mercifully escaped*, been widely proclaimed a-broad! *Vid. the lucubrations of a PETTICOAT PRIEST, OVER*

Upon this head, as upon every other, I only wish that the real truth may appear. If I have been deceived, and if the public have been deceived, with respect to your sentiment and practice, in this particular; happy indeed should I be to have the deception done away. But will you suffer me, Sir, to bring the matter to a point?

Either there was an *acknowledged* church of Christ at Sedgwick, or there was not. If there *was*; I ask, then, again, with the utmost seriousness, how could you and your brethren go down, and, in the open face of the world, demolish that church, and treat all its sacred things, as unholy and profane? But if you acknowledged no church of Christ at Sedgwick; why then attempt to impress the public mind with a belief, that you do acknowledge our churches?

Again, either you do acknowledge us to be churches of Christ, or you do not. If you do thus acknowledge us; how then can you separate yourselves from our communion; take away our members, without regarding at all their sacred relation to us; and treat all our covenant engagements and solemnities, as things which may at pleasure be trampled in the dust? But if you do not acknowledge us churches of Christ; then suffer me again to ask, why would you hold out a shew as if you did thus acknowledge us?

the signature of LYDIA, in the Mass. Miss. Mag. !"—Yes, Sir; these are your own words; for I find them in the *three hundred and thirty-ninth page* of your book; and without any comment, I return them to you for your sober reflection. I assure you, however, that from the pointless shafts of vulgar ridicule, by whomsoever wielded, the serious writer of the "serious" piece, in the Mass. Miss. Magazine, *under the signature of LYDIA*, has but little to fear.

In the different parts of your book, instances of a similar *fury* and *dignity* of style are conspicuous; several of which I once had it in mind to collect and present together, in one *luminous* view. But really, Sir, it is not without extreme pain, that I have given from a *Christian writer*, and one whom I have been accustomed so much to respect, the single specimen now exhibited. I will just, however, observe, that you have one passage, (p. 220.) which, though evidently penned with great complacency, no consideration whatever should prevail on me to transcribe; as I would admit nothing upon my page, which might not be read, in any circle, without *crimsoning the face of modesty*.

But is it possible, that after all, you should have in this case, a *reservation*? Could you mean that you acknowledge us indeed to be *churches*—but NOT *churches of CHRIST*? Language of this sort, from antipedobaptists, I have long indeed been accustomed to hear. Even Mr. Merrill calls us *churches*—CHURCHES OF ANTI-CHRIST.—But surely, Sir, you could not, intentionally, thus trifle with the public, in a case of this serious nature. You could not, from any motives of popularity, or party interest, intend to *disguise* the truth, by *ambiguously* acknowledging us to be *churches*, but NOT *churches of CHRIST*. This subject, however, I now leave to your own reflections, and to the judgment of a candid public.

“7. The author of the Discourses,” you say, “has charged the *anabaptists** with placing such stress upon baptism, *in their mode*, as to make it the subject on which to display their greatest zeal; thus making people believe, in too many instances, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort, and their eternal salvation.”

It is here to be observed, I did not say nor imply, that you *intended* to make people thus believe; but that your zeal, on this point, whether intentionally, or not, really had this effect.

But upon this you warmly ask, “Can Mr. Worcester lay his hand on his heart and solemnly declare, that he believes the above charge to be true?” Yes, Sir, I can; and declare it too, as ‘solemnly,’ as if at the bar of our common Judge. And as I am by no means singular in this belief—a belief very generally impressed; so neither have I taken it up lightly, or without serious regard to ‘evidence.’

Upon this subject, Sir, a subject of high solemnity, I would not for my life let a single word escape from my pen, but under the fullest conviction of its truth. Nay, it is not without deep concern that I make the statements, which, in *truth* and *duty*, I am called upon to make.

But is it possible, Sir, that you should be unapprized of what is so generally known and deplored, that religious revivals of the most hopeful appearances have very often been checked and made to subside, by antipedo-

* This I still consider the proper name.

baptists coming in, and zealously pressing the subject of baptism *in your mode*? So numerous, indeed, and so notorious, are instances of this sort, that whenever, in times of revival, antipedobaptists come into our societies; it is almost invariably considered, by the most serious and judicious, both ministers and people, as a sad indication, or presage, that the gracious work will not much longer continue; and that the great *essentials* of religion will soon be lost out of sight, in the *zeal, not according to knowledge, for modes and forms*. For the correctness of this statement, I confidently appeal to the best informed ministers and christian people, throughout our country at large.

Many, Sir, within my knowledge, have been the instances of persons, under serious awakenings, whose attention has been turned, by the preaching or conversation of antipedobaptists, from subjects, the most intimately connected with their eternal salvation: to the subject of *going into the water*, as if this were of the first and highest concernment. Many the instances of persons in these solemn circumstances, to whom representations have been made, as if, *by going into the water*, they would immediately find peace. And by representations of this sort, not a few, as there is the utmost reason to fear, have been induced to make the *flattering* experiment; and having gone into the water in a vain confidence, have afterwards sit down in a delusive peace, as if all were well. Alas! Sir, is it not a solemn thing for people to be misled to their eternal destruction! God grant they may see their error, before it be too late.

Here, however, that I may not be misunderstood, nor make on any mind an undue impression, I feel it incumbent on me to declare, and I make the declaration with great satisfaction, that while I believe the affecting instances now described, to be many; I also as fully believe that many, who *go into the water*, are graciously renewed disciples of Christ; and that they go into the water with an *honest* view to answer a *good*, though *not well informed*, conscience.

“8. The next thing which we shall notice,” you say, “is a charge against us of delusion and superstition, on the account of our pretending to follow Christ into the water.”

Christ's baptism, as you yourself acknowledge, was un-

doubtedly of an import altogether different from that, which he afterwards instituted for his followers. No reason, therefore, appears, why his baptism should be considered, as an example for us, any more than any other thing, which, as the Saviour of the world, it behoved him to do, or to suffer. And should any zealous persons be impressed with the idea, that they must be circumcised, or fast forty days in the wilderness, or ride on an ass to Jerusalem, or even die upon a cross, in order to follow Christ; and this should be represented to them as *delusion*, or *superstition*; why might they not call such a representation an '*invective*,' and adopting your words, ardently reply, "*It seems then, Christ did not intend that his followers should follow him!*" Nay, why might they not go through, and with all your pathos, add, "There are some who seem to exult, that they are not so deluded as to follow him in these particulars. We envy them not their happiness; but we freely confess we aspire after the felicity of those, of whom it will one day be said, "*These are they, which follow the Lamb, whithersoever HE GOETH!*"

Doubtless, Sir, they might talk as movingly as you do, about "*taking up the cross;*" they might use words and phrases, calculated to strike the passions as forcibly as your "*watry grave;*"* and they might with as much *humility* as you do, claim a superiority over other christians, on account of their great *self-denial*. But of what avail, with a well informed Christian, would all this be to their purpose? They might, indeed, be thought *sincere*, and they might be pitied; but would they not still be viewed as under the influence of *delusion*, or *superstition*?

It is our duty to observe baptism, not in *imitation* of Christ's *example*, but in *obedience* to his *institution*. But even if Christ's baptism were an example for us, it would by no means follow that we must be immersed; for there is strong reason to believe, that Christ was not baptized by immersion.†

Have you any evidence, Sir, that pedobaptists are not as humble, as self denying, as conscientiously obedient

* Was Jordan Christ's grave? If not; is it not a mark of *delusion* to talk of following Christ *into his watry grave*?

† See "THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST," Mass. Miss. Magazine, Vol. iv. No. 5.

to the gospel, as ready to take up the cross and follow Christ, as you and your brethren are? If you have not; is it, then, a small thing that you arrogate to yourselves the exclusive honour of being the *followers of the Lamb*? Let us remember, Sir, that *should we even give our bodies to be burned, and yet have not charity, it would profit us nothing. But charity VAUNTETH not itself; is not PUFFED UP; doth not behave itself UNSEEMLY; seeketh not HER OWN; is not easily PROVOKED; AND THINKETH NO EVIL. Not he that COMMENDETH HIMSELF shall be approved; but whom the LORD COMMENDETH.*

On the whole, Sir, it appears, that what, for certain purposes, you were pleased to call my "*invectives against the Baptists*," were only fair and serious, and important, representations of truth and of fact.

It is not an uncommon thing, for people, when pressed with argument, or with a clear exposure of their errors, to cry out—"Persecution." This they find a very convenient way to parry the force of argument, and to awaken in their favour a popular sympathy. This, Sir, give me leave to say, you appear very perfectly to understand.

But again, I must be suffered to ask, is it a light thing for you and your brethren, at once to claim for yourselves the distinguished glory of *being persecuted for righteousness sake*; and to charge upon those, who feel it their duty to defend the church, the covenant, and ordinances of God, against your assaults, with the odious and heinous crime of *persecution*? While our churches are openly denounced, as being no churches of Christ; while our covenant solemnities are publicly treated as invalid and profane; while our children are taught to despise the seal of God which is upon them; while we are stigmatized, in direct terms, as "*Judaizers*" and abettors of "*Antichrist*;" and while breaches are attempted to be made upon us, at every point, and every breach actually made is triumphantly proclaimed, as a sure presage of our utter demolition;—are we to sit perfectly still, and can we not move, or open our mouths, in the way of defence, without incurring the charge and the odium of a persecuting spirit?

It is a fact as notorious, as it is deserving of attention, that in this unhappy contest, you are invariably the assailants. You are engaged, as far as in your power, to

break up and overthrow our churches, and our religious order; and *our* part is strictly the *part of defence*. This Sir, I consider an undeniable fact. But though you avowedly, and upon system, make inroads upon us wherever you can, and openly triumph in the spoils of churches; yet no sooner do we attempt any defence of ourselves, and of what we believe to be the cause of truth and of God, than you immediately resort to the cry of "*persecution*," as if we were the offending party. Is there not something in all this, Sir, which clearly evinces, that all on your part is not right?

Truth, pure and conscious truth, will never retreat from the field of fair argument, and clamorously seek shelter in popular sympathy. Charity, that heavenly *charity*, which *seeketh not her own*, will never claim for herself the privilege of acting offensively, or even defensively, without allowing, at the same time, both her principles, and her conduct, to be fairly and fully examined. Nothing can more strongly, and unequivocally, mark a weak and a bad cause, than a readiness either angrily to clamour, ignobly to complain, or unchristianly to jeer, when fairly and religiously opposed.

Respectfully yours, &c.



LETTER XXIV.

REV. & DEAR SIR,

IN my Discourses, I had occasion to state, that 'the anabaptists, or antipedobaptists, are a sect of *modern date*;' that 'they had their origin sometime after the reformation under Luther and Calvin;' and that 'from that period to the present, though they have considerably increased, and some of them improved, yet they have ever been but a very *small proportion* of the Christian world—but a very *small proportion* of the true and faithful professing people of God.' This statement I still believe to be, in every part of it, most strictly correct; and of sufficient importance to claim your very serious consideration.

Unpleasant as the fact is, it ought not to be dissembled, that the history of your denomination is easily traced back to the German anabaptists; who first made their appearance at Munster about the year 1522, and who by their wild irregularities, gave so much trouble to Luther and his worthy associates: but farther back than this it cannot be traced. As for the Petrobrusians of the twelfth century, it is still very doubtful whether they were antipedobaptists; and if they were, they continued but for a short time, and then entirely disappeared. Between them and the rise of your denomination in Germany, more than 300 years elapsed, and there are no links, by which to connect your history with theirs. From the eleventh century back to the fourth, Dr. Gill himself acknowledges he was "not able to find *one instance* of an opposer of Infant Baptism."* And from the testimonies adduced in my former publication, and in my twenty-first Letter, it is clear, that during the first four centuries, Infant Baptism was universally received in the church; excepting that Turtullian and Gregory were of opinion, that in ordinary cases, it would be better, if baptism were deferred.

So clear it is, that the antipedobaptists are really a sect of *modern date*. Nor is it less clear that, since their rise, though in some countries 'they have considerably increased; yet they have ever been but a very *small proportion* of the true and faithful professing people of God.⁹ This, indeed, is so clear as not to be disputed.

But what, my dear Sir, is the plain inference from these facts? Is it not, that the pretensions of your denomination, as if you were exclusively the church of God, are as evidently absurd, as they are singularly arrogant; and that in denying, and separating yourselves from, pedobaptists at large, you deny, and separate yourselves from, the great body of God's church and people of all ages?

According to your pretensions, it is only for about three hundred years, that the church of God has existed in the world: for it had no existence under the ancient dispensation, nor even under the present, until your de-

* Had Mr. Merrill turned to the 26th page of Dr. Gill's Answer to Mr. Clark, he might have spared himself the trouble of denying that Dr. Gill had ever made this concession, and of charging me with falsehood in the case.

nomination arose. And during these three hundred years of its existence, it has been, upon your principles, so limited, as to embrace but a very small proportion of the *faithful* of the nations !

I ask you, then, sir, if your pretensions are well founded ; what valuable purpose has the church of God answered ? From the sacred oracles, indeed, we have understood, that the church was designed to be *the pillar and ground of the truth* ; that by the church, principally, truth and religion were to be maintained in the world. But if your antipedobaptist pretensions are to be admitted ; how will it appear that, by the church, any such design has been answered ? Will it not, on the contrary appear, that during four thousand years before Christ, and more than fifteen hundred years after him, truth and religion were maintained in the world, not in any part by the church of God, but wholly by those who had no connexion with it !

The facts now alluded to, the lateness of your origin, and the smallness of your numbers, compared with the great body of God's people, has been urged, and justly I think urged,* as an argument against your peculiar sentiments. But this argument you refuse to admit.

Yes, Sir, even you yourself, instead of admitting these facts as any evidence against you, have even made use of them as an argument in support of your claims. "It has often" you say, "been urged as an argument in favor of the Christian religion, that it made its way at first, against the *learning, power, and policy* of the world, by the instrumentality of a few *illiterate fishermen*. Does not this argument cast its full weight into the scale in favor of our distinguishing sentiments, if the observations of our brethren respecting us be just ?"†—So, then, the whole body of christian professors, opposed to your "*distinguishing sentiments*," are to be accounted as the "*world*;" and because your *sentiments* have "made their way against their *learning, power, and policy*, there is the same evidence of *their* truth, as of the truth of the "*Christian religion* ?"—This is the purport of your argument. And in perfect correspondence, with this, addressing yourself to us of the pedobaptist faith, in the

* Particularly, by my friend and brother Anderson, in a very candid publication, which has been treated with great abuse.

† Appendix, p. 330.

close of your book, you are pleased very pathetically to observe : " When you cast your eyes upon the baptist churches, you behold a people *spread abroad*, who have risen from a handful to a *great multitude*. *Like the primitive church, they have had to encounter all the prejudices of the learned and of the ignorant :*" that is, " all the *prejudices*" of the great body of pedobaptist professors, who are all to be accounted as the "*world !*"

Yes, Sir, you have here told us, in language sufficiently explicit, that you of the antipedobaptist faith are *THE people, exclusively the people and church of God* ; that all who have been opposed to your sentiments are to be accounted as being of the world ; and that the comparative smallness of your numbers, together with the opposition made to your sentiments, is to be considered as a clear and decisive evidence in your favor. And *we* are called upon, in a very formal manner, to " behold how you have risen, (recently risen) from a handful to a *great multitude* ;" and therefore to beware, how we dispute your claims. And to give to this matter its highest finishing, in your closing address to your " baptist brethren," you tell them expressly, and with great apparent complacency, that they are the people, to whom "*it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake !*" This, unquestionably, is the distinctive and exclusive characteristic of the true people and church of God ; and in perfect conformity with this is the whole of your closing Address.

In perfect agreement with this also is the language, thro'out, of Mr. Merrill's reply to my Discourses ; which, if my information be correct, was published under your eye, and with your approbation. Mr. M. affirms explicitly, that "*not so much as any single branch of the Church of Christ, in any place or age of the world, hath ever adhered to Infant Baptism ;*" that "*Infant Baptism is peculiar to Antichrist's kingdom ;*" that " Mr. Worcester and his brethren can trace their descent from the *papists*, and their peculiarities, Infant Baptism, &c. from the *man of sin, and no farther ;*" that " the public ought to be apprized, that Mr. Worcester, from beginning to end of his Sermons, has been pleading *the cause, and for the church and ordinance of Antichrist ;*" that " he is within the limits of *Antichrist's church*, and is laboring hard to defend *her principles and practices ;*" and that " *antipe-*

dobaptists have ALWAYS DENIED, THAT THE PEDOBAPTIST CHURCH IS THE TRUE GOSPEL CHURCH, and have EVER CONSIDERED PEDOBAPTISM AS A BADGE OF ANTICHRIST, IF NOT HER ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC !”

Now, sir, is it not time that these high pretensions were brought to the test? Is it, then, true that your denomination is exclusively the church of God, and that the whole body of pedobaptist professors have been, and still are, of the “*world*,” and of “*the kingdom of Antichrist*?” This is the grand question now at issue between us.

What then are the grounds, on which your pretensions rest? Where are the evidences, where the conclusive proofs, that your denomination, which had its rise only about 300 years ago, and has always been comparatively small, has, nevertheless, throughout all generations, been the pillar and ground of the truth? Where are the evidences, where the conclusive proofs, that, principally, by your denomination, the cause of truth and religion has been maintained and promoted in the world?

Where, Sir, was your denomination, where your antipedobaptist church, during the four thousand years, which preceded the coming of the Messiah? By your own confession it was not in existence.—Where was your antipedobaptist church, in the primitive ages after Christ, when no one was ever known, or heard of, who denied Infant Baptism? By the testimony of the fathers, it is plain, it was not in existence. Where was your antipedobaptist church, from the fourth to the eleventh century, when according to the confession of your own Dr. Gill, “not a single instance was to be found of an opposer of Infant Baptism?” Evidently, it was not in existence.—Where was your antipedobaptist church in the days of the reformation, when Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Zuinglius, with their faithful and intrepid coadjutors, beat down the bulwarks of Antichrist, and carried terror and dismay to the very seat of the Beast? Alas! it began to make its appearance a few years after the reformation commenced, and immediately arrayed itself in the most troublesome opposition to the great body of the reformers.—Where was your antipedobaptist church, in the times of the bloody persecutions, succeeding the reformation, when millions of

faithful confessors, in different parts of Europe, laid down their lives, *for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ?* But little indeed, was known of it, to its credit; but little did it share in the distinguished honours of the Cross.—Where, in fine, was your antipedobaptist church, when our pious and venerable ancestors abandoned their native country, and surmounting all the difficulties of the ocean; and of the wilderness, heroically planted the standard of the Cross in this new world? In that glorious enterprise, it had no share.

Again look back, Sir, upon all past ages, review the whole history of God's cause in the world; and tell us what has been done for its support and promotion, by your denomination, to be compared with that which was done by the ancient Jewish church, the Zion of Jehovah, by you so much despised and reproached?—Or what, to be compared with that which in later ages has been done, by pedobaptist professors, by you denounced, as belonging to the *world* and to *Antichrist*?

Where, Sir, is your ancient *cloud of witnesses*, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens? Where are your martyrs and confessors, who in the successive periods of trial, stood forward in the glorious conflict, and braved the storms, either of pagan or of papal persecution? Where are your worthies, your champions of the Cross, who in the successive ages of the world, have been in the first ranks of God's host; and, *valiant for the truth on the earth*, have victoriously wielded the arms of the gospel against all the legions of the adversary?—A few names of late you have had; who have indeed done worthily; and we honour and love them, for the services which they have rendered. But what are those few, in a comparative estimate, upon the general scale?

Really, Sir, I tremble for you, when I consider your pretensions. I tremble, when I consider that you exclude from the church of God, the great body of his faithful people, both of ancient and modern ages. And I cannot but think, that it highly behoves you, to make a solemn pause, and deliberately to survey the ground, on which you stand.

At any rate, I envy you not your situation. When I "cast my eyes upon the baptist churches, and *behold a people spread abroad, who have risen from a handful to a great multitude*; I am far, I can assure you, from any inclination to renounce all connexion with God's ancient Zion, and the great body of his covenant people in modern ages, for the sake of going over to your narrow communion. I have no sort of belief, that because you are thus *spread abroad*, and have thus recently risen, you are therefore to be considered as exclusively the true church of Christ, and all the rest as Antichrist.

Neither does your boasted increase give me the least impression in your favour. It is an age of delusion and error; it is a day of trial and of falling away: and the well informed friends of truth have been taught to expect, that in these *last and perilous times*, errors of all kinds will prevail and *spread abroad*; and that many, very many, even of the people of God, will be in a greater or less degree corrupted. So far then from considering your increase, in this period of the world, as an evidence in your favor; I really consider it, as holding a place among the many evidences against you. I expect, Sir, that you *will* encrease, as I expect other erroneous denominations to inerease; until a brighter day, than the present, shall dawn upon the church and the world.

I rejoice, however, in the confidence, that Christ still reigns upon the holy hill of Zion, and that his cause will ultimately triumph over all opposition, both from his misled friends, and his determined enemies. In the mean time, I feel no disposition to fall in with the tide of modern *innovation*, however popular, or however strong; but am perfectly content to cast in my lot with that despised and reproached church, which, from the earliest ages, and under different dispensations, has been the grand pillar of the truth in the world; which has stood all the shocks of time, and the most desperate assaults from earth and hell; and which her God has promised to make *an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations*.

Yes, Sir, if I may only have a part in the Zion of God, which from the beginning he was graciously pleased to *set as a seal upon his heart*, and to which he has given assurances of perpetual love; which embraced the patriarchs, and prophets, and righteous men of ancient times, and to which have belonged the glorious company

of martyrs, and confessors, and worthies of later ages ; I shall be but little, very little, disposed to renounce this honoured and blessed fellowship, and go over to *another*, and a *modern*, communion. Nor can I ever be made to believe, that those principles, the legitimate result of which is, to break fellowship with God's ancient church, and turn over to the *world*, and to the *kingdom of Antichrist*, the great body of his faithful people, are the true principles of the gospel of Christ. And as your antipedobaptist principles are of this description, I consider them as bearing a *most conspicuous and unequivocal mark of error*.

Erroneous, however, as I certainly believe your principles to be, much as I deplore their unhappy and injurious results, both to yourselves, to your children, and to the church of God at large, and deeply as I feel it my duty to employ my feeble endeavours in opposition to them ; still most sacredly would I cherish and cultivate, the spirit of brotherly kindness and charity, towards those of your denomination, (and I trust there are many) who really love our Lord Jesus Christ, and are sincerely, though under a misguiding influence, seeking the honor of his name, and the advancement of his cause. This spirit, I have ever professed, and this spirit, as my people will bear me witness, I have ever, both in public and in private, endeavored to promote. And if, in any instance, any thing savouring of a different spirit, have escaped from my pen, or from my lips ; happy, indeed, should I be, could I in the fullest manner recal it, and make it as though it had never been.

Some I know there are, who seem to imagine, that good people are not to be opposed, even when erroneous. If they be Christians, all with them is well ; let them hold their errors and practise upon them, without any interruption. But so far am I from holding this to be correct ; my full persuasion, on the contrary, is, that as the errors of *good people* are likely to have a more extensive influence than the errors of others ; so it is proportionably important, that *their* errors be detected, and as far as possible suppressed. Neither do I consider it in the least incompatible with the most perfect charity and kindness, candidly and faithfully to withstand the error of erring brethren.

From several intimations in your book, as well as in Mr. Merrill's, the uninformed public might be led to conclude, that there had been a great falling away of my people to your denomination; that of those who remain, many are in a wavering and unsettled state; and that this is the reason of my employing the endeavours, which I have thought it my duty to employ, to stay the tide of antipedobaptism. But intimations of this sort, I can assure you, Sir, might very well have been spared. In my endeavours, in this instance, I have certainly had reference particularly to my own people. As a pastor, caring for his flock, it has been my earnest wish to fortify the minds of my people against prevailing error, and to establish them, as firmly as possible, in the covenant and truth of God. And I have the satisfaction to believe, that, by the blessing of God, my endeavours have not proved altogether unsuccessful.

But with pleasure, Sir, I can assure you, and with reference to the intimations now in view, I feel it my duty to assure you, that amidst all the changes of these changing times, both the church and society at large, with which I have the happiness to be connected, have evinced an exemplary stability, with which I have the utmost reason to be satisfied.

I have now, Sir, gone through with the design, and even exceeded the original design, with which these Letters were commenced. With what success it has been executed, a candid public will determine. These Letters, indeed, in considerable part, I have written, as I now bring them to a close, in a very impaired and precarious state of health; and consequently under many disadvantages, and with great interruptions. Faulty, however, as in other respects they may appear, they will not, I trust, be pronounced uncandid.

But whatever the judgment of the public may be, I can assure you, Sir, that amidst all the solitudes and depressions of my present situation, it affords me matter of great thankfulness, and no small consolation, that I have been enabled to finish, though in a very imperfect manner, this decided testimony in favour of the everlasting covenant, and the chosen Zion of God. And this consolation I should have, did I even know *this* to be the last labour of my life.

With fervent prayers for the prosperity of Zion, and for the union of all the people of God, in the truth and fellowship of Christ, and with sentiments of undissembled affection and respect, I subscribe myself,

Yours, dear Sir,

in the hope of the Gospel,

SAMUEL WORCESTER.

POSTSCRIPT.

AT the end of Mr. Merrill's Letters, occasioned by my Discourses, a note is given, purporting, that "a remarkable coincidence would be observed, between the arguments contained" in those Letters, and yours contained in your book. This I deem correct; and therefore consider an answer to your arguments, as being also, in general, an answer to his. A few things, however, of an historical nature, found in his book, I have taken occasion, in my twentieth Letter, to notice. After the specimens exhibited of his style and manner, the public, I am persuaded, will not think it incumbent on me, to bestow upon him any further attention.

You have intimated, indeed, that for the gentlemen, who have engaged in the controversy with Mr. Merrill, "*it would be infinitely disgraceful to be beaten by him.*" For myself, I have never pretended to enter the lists with Mr. Merrill; but I must confess to you, Sir, that, for any gentleman of christian profession and character to "beat him," *with the weapons, which he has chosen for the combat*, would be, in my view, an indelible reproach to the christian cause.

The matter, referred to by me, which, notwithstanding the substantial testimonies in support of it, he has thought proper again to deny, and to treat as a "*slander*," I have given into the hands of the gentlemen, who heard the expression from his own mouth, who have written to him on the subject, and are prepared for any further measures, which the circumstances of the case may require. With a man, who will deny a fact, directly in the face of *two or three witnesses*, I cannot contend.

CONTENTS.

- LETTER I. Preliminary survey.
- LETTER II. Dr. Baldwin's "mathematical demonstration" considered.
- LETTER III. The church originally founded on the promise in Paradise.
- LETTER IV. God's covenant transactions with Abraham.
- LETTER V. The great gospel promise included in the covenant with Abraham and his seed.
- LETTER VI. Same subject continued.
- LETTER VII. The ONE SEED, which is Christ, considered.
- LETTER VIII. A cardinal point noted and fixed.
- LETTER IX. The seal of the righteousness of faith.
- LETTER X. The comprehension of God's ancient covenant.
- LETTER XI. The perpetuity of the covenant.
- LETTER XII. Oneness of the pre-Christian and post-Christian church.
- LETTER XIII. The same subject continued.
- LETTER XIV. The same subject continued.
- LETTER XV. Is baptism in the place of circumcision?
- LETTER XVI. The affirmative of the question proved.
- LETTER XVII. Points made.
- LETTER XVIII. Provision of the covenant respecting children.
- LETTER XIX. Same subject continued.
- LETTER XX. Testimony of the Fathers vindicated.
- × LETTER XXI. Summary view of the evidences of Infant Baptism.
- × LETTER XXII. Mode of Baptism.
- LETTER XXIII. Reply to Dr. Baldwin's vindication of the Baptists.
- × LETTER XXIV. Pretensions of the Baptists considered. Conclusion.

ERRORS.

- Page 11. line 29, for *ever* read *even*.
13. bottom, for *including*, read *included in*.
17. top, for *thus* read *then*.—line 2, for *a thousand*, read *two thousand*.
93. l. 12, from bottom, for *deemed*, read *denied*.

Some less material errors the reader will notice, and have the goodness to correct.





